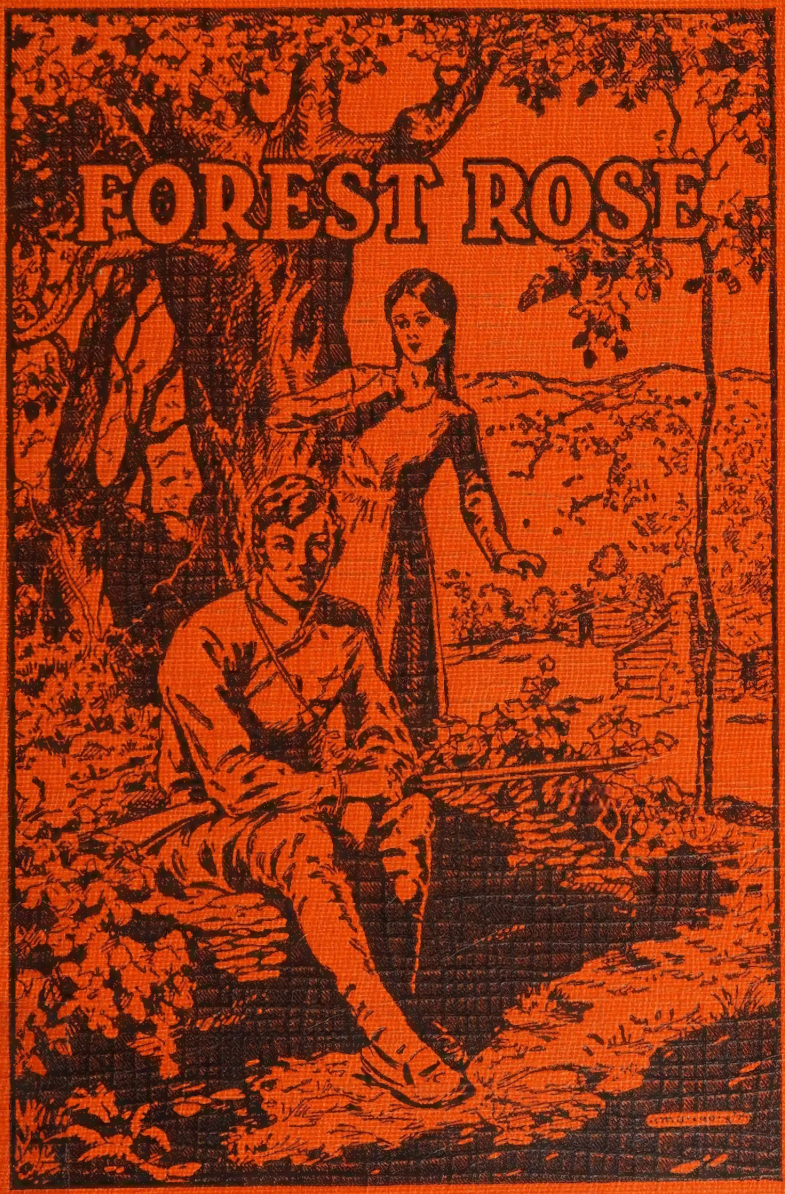
FOREST ROSE



BY FRANK E. WILSON

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THE AUTHOR

Frank E. Wilson

BORN in Missouri, Frank E. Wilson came at a very early age to Fairfield County, Ohio, with his widowed mother. Mr. Wilson grew up in the rural districts and attended the one-room rural school where his mother's family, the Chaneys, for three generations had received their education. From this family is descended Lon Chaney, the celebrated movie actor, who is a first cousin of the author.

Mr. Wilson attended high school in the adjacent village of Carroll and soon after graduation was appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

Later he taught school for many years, serving as superintendent of schools at Lithopolis, Continental and Mt. Sterling, Ohio. At Monticello, Kentucky, where he served in a similar capacity, he gathered the material for his first book, "The Hill Billy Kid," published by Rand, McNally & Company.

Frank E. Wilson has been connected with the Ohio Department of Education since October 1, 1923.

FOREST ROSE

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FOREST ROSE

By

FRANK E. WILSON

Department of Education, State of Ohio

AUTHOR OF

THE HILL BILLY KID

THE BROWN PUBLISHING COMPANY

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FOREWORD

Eighty years ago appeared the first edition of "Forest Rose" by Emerson Bennett, a thrilling story of pioneer days in Ohio. It attained unusual popularity, the sales reaching above one hundred thousand; a truly remarkable figure for that time. More than a hundred other romances by the same author have passed entirely out of print, and "Forest Rose" would, no doubt, have suffered the same fate but for the enterprise of a small bookseller of Lancaster, Fairfield County, which city now occupies the site of the most thrilling episode of the story.

With the thought that a story of such intrinsic merit, and so ideally typifying the struggles of the pioneers of Ohio with the Indians whom they displaced, should not be lost entirely, the present writer has undertaken to re-write it, correcting certain historical inaccuracies, and filling in certain historical details from contemporary works of established authenticity. Particularly is this true of one of the outstanding characters of the book, Lewis Wetzel, the justly famous scout of the story and without whose mighty deeds of valor it could not have been written at all. An entirely new chapter has been introduced in which Wetzel recites to his companion scout the remarkable story of his own life, and accounts for his insatiable vengeance against the Indians, which in the original work seems unaccountable and

unjustifiable. Another new chapter has been added, giving some of the details of the long search of Wetzel and Albert Maywood for the captive, Forest Rose, and their meeting and association with other celebrated scouts of that time.

The first chapter of the book as Bennett wrote it, being merely concerned with the historical setting, is now omitted and the facts herewith briefly stated.

In the year 1789 a family consisting of father, mother, two sons, and two daughters—one of the latter by adoption—emigrated from Virginia and settled near the southeastern angle of what is now Belmont County, Ohio. On a branch of Captina creek, which in time flows into the Ohio River, and on a little knoll which rose in the form of a cone, a log cabin, typical of those days, was reared. The family name was Maywood; that of the adopted daughter, Rose Forester, more familiarly known, in the way of family endearment, as "Forest Rose."

At the breaking out of the Revolutionary War the elder Maywood and Forester his neighbor and friend, both prosperous Virginia planters at the time, volunteered their services to the colonies. Forester was commissioned colonel of his regiment, and Maywood, a captain under him. At the battle of Cowpens in 1781, Forester, mortally wounded, was borne from the field by Maywood, and died in his arms. His wife having died only a month before, the Colonel's last thought was for his little daughter, Rose, then but nine years old. Captain Maywood promised the dying man to care for and cherish her as his own, and, upon his return to Virginia at the close of the war, found her already a member of his own household.

Both Maywood and Forester had contributed of their means to the support of the army to the extent of mortgaging their plantations, so that when Captain Maywood succeeded in getting the estates settled, very little remained. He removed his family to Richmond and invested in a business for which he was unfitted, and he soon found himself penniless. His affairs having been represented to the government, Congress made him a grant of one thousand acres of land in the section of country to which reference has already been made, being included in what was then known as Washington County, organized by Governor St. Clair as the first county in the Northwest Territory.

To this land Captain Maywood removed his family, including his adopted daughter Rose Forester, in the fall of 1789. At this time there were very few settlers in this section, and none between the Maywood cabin and the Ohio River, some miles away. The Indians of this region had been peaceable for some time, but during the winter which followed the arrival of the Maywoods there were rumors of massacres of white settlers on the Muskingum River. Fearing that the Indians would invade their neighborhood, most of the settlers proceeded to build block houses adjacent to their cabins as a refuge for defense. Not so Captain Maywood, however, for he had a theory that, unless the Indians were molested by the whites, they would remain forever peaceably disposed toward them.

In vain his elder son, Albert, now an intelligent youth of twenty-two years, tried to reason him out of his foolish theory, on the grounds that the Indians,

having long been at war with the whites, and seeing themselves in danger of being dispossessed of their lands without just compensation, would look upon all settlers as aggressors and enemies, and treat them accordingly. These arguments produced no effect upon his father, unless it were to make him more obstinate than ever. He not only refused to erect a block house for the defense of his family, but forbade his son the privilege of doing so himself.

Time wore on, a year passed away, and still Captain Maywood and his family remained undisturbed. The Captain and his younger son, three years Albert's junior, had labored diligently in clearing and preparing for cultivation the land adjacent to the cabin, and the pinch of poverty was passing. Albert took no interest in these pursuits, but devoted himself to trapping and to roaming the forests in pursuit of game. He was blessed with a large vigorous frame, peculiarly adapted to forest life, and a quick, ardent, temperament, susceptible to love or hatred. In his hunting excursions he had made the acquaintance of Lewis Wetzel, who without doubt shared honors with Simon Kenton as the foremost scout and Indian fighter of the territory northwest of the Ohio River. It is in connection with Wetzel that Bennett seems to have been most inaccurate in his statements. He repeatedly uses the phrase "the old hunter" in referring to Wetzel, when, as a matter of fact, the date of Wetzel's birth is well established as 1764. At the beginning of the story he was not, therefore, past twenty-five years of age, and at its conclusion was still under thirty. Undoubtedly, however, even at that period of his life, he gave an impression of age far

beyond his years; for from the age of eighteen, when he served in the ill-fated expedition of Colonel Crawford against the Indians, he rarely spent more than a single night in a human habitation. Thus, living the strenuous and hazardous life of a lone scout in the trackless forest, infested with savages; exposed continually to the ravaging effects of unceasing vigilance, toilsome journeys, and to the elements of a climate subject to extremes of heat and cold; subsisting on whatever food he might secure with his trusty rifle, and making his bed in whatever shelter nature and circumstances might provide; and passing through harrowing experiences such as few men saw and survived, his appearance was doubtless such as to fully justify Bennett's appellation.

Then, too, Bennett's description of Wetzel's stature is hardly true to fact, since all contemporary biographers describe him as two or three inches under six feet, instead of above that height. Here again the error seems justifiable, for his peculiar head dress, as we shall later describe, was such as to give him the appearance of being much taller than he really was.

With these brief remarks we introduce the characters themselves, leaving the reader to discover their propensities and to follow their fortunes as the story develops.

Mt. Pleasant as it is today. (The Standing Stone of the Wyandotts.)

FOREST ROSE

CHAPTER I

THE PRESENTIMENT

Toward evening on a warm and pleasant day in May the rays of the declining sun threw the shadows of the taller forest trees far out across a little clearing in the center of which, and upon an elevation from which it could be clearly seen, stood the ordinary styled cabin of a pioneer family. From a dense thicket which bordered the forest at that point stepped cautiously and silently a maiden of apparently seventeen years, clad in the simple costume of the frontier. Anxiously she scanned the landscape before her until her gaze became fixed upon an object about fifty feet distant. Gradually the expression changed, her eyes brightened, her forehead cleared, and a bright smile spread over her countenance. Rather small of stature but perfectly formed, with an open, frank playful countenance, with features fine and regular, with clear complexion and dark, sparkling eyes, with long black hair falling in a double plait over her slender shoulders, she presented against the verdant background a picture that would have delighted the soul of an artist.

As she stepped forward, placing her small moccasined feet with extreme care, the grace of her movement and the stealth of her advance would have done

credit to a nymph of the forest at her back. More and more cautiously she proceeded until she halted, scarcely breathing, within arm's reach of a man reclining lazily upon the trunk of a fallen tree and gazing dreamily at the clearing and cabin before him. The light blue smoke curled slowly upward from the rude chimney, and spread itself out in the rays of the dying sun, which poured a golden flood of light into the opening, and made the little creek in the distance glisten like a belt of silver. The hill on the opposite side of the valley had been partially cleared and a large corn and potato patch was in sight, with the tops of the green vegetables showing above the rich soil and giving it a greenish cast. Beyond and around on every side, like the framework of a picture, the dark green forest—with its noble trees of oak and ash, beech and maple, elm and sycamore—shut in the scene, and gave to it that sylvan beauty which the meditative poet so loves to contemplate.

Arrested by the beauty and tranquillity of the scene, the maiden paused with hand upraised, a look of awe and rapture slowly overspreading her lovely features as her eyes rested lovingly upon the perfect panorama of light and shadow and color. But not for long did her playful mood desert her nor was the purpose of her stealthy approach forgotten. Her gaze returned to the drooping shoulders before her, clad in the garb of a hunter, and to the long shining rifle which lay across the hunter's knees. His hunting cap had been removed and lay upon the tree trunk beside him. Furtively reaching for it she raised it with both hands above the hunter's head and dropped it well forward over his eyes.

It was a period when it behooved every one to be constantly on his guard against lurking savages. With a bound that would have done credit to a practiced vaulter, the hunter sprang some feet from the log at the same time wheeling and bringing his rifle to his shoulder to fire upon the intruder.

A light, merry laugh was the response to this warlike demonstration, and instantly bringing the breach of his rifle to the ground, the hunter sprang forward, exclaiming:

"Why, my little Forest Rose, how you startled me! How came you here?"

"By the simplest method in the world," replied the other gaily. "My feet brought me here."

"I understand all that, my little rogue; but what I want to know is, why your feet brought you here?"

"Simply because I willed them to do so."

"Pshaw—"

"There, there, Albert—don't frown now, and I'll answer your question, not as you put it, but as you meant it. I came here expressly to surprise you."

"Well, that purpose you surely accomplished; but how did you know I was here?"

"How? Ha, ha, ha! Come, you get wiser in your interrogations every minute. How should I know you were here?"

"I mean, how came you to see me for I saw nothing of you?"

"Why, I had just been up to speak a word with father about some seeds for our garden, and thought I might as well run on up to the top of the hill, seeing I was more than half way, and take a view of this pretty landscape—when, just as I got to the edge

of the clearing, whom should I see pop out of the woods but Master Albert himself, large as life, but not seeing me. I kept concealed until you seemed pretty well settled and absorbed, and then stole softly up behind you, to give you a gentle surprise. But, I say, Albert, what news of the woods?"

"None, Rose, none."

"What! Have you had no adventures today, Albert?"

"None at all—unless sitting upon a log and being gently surprised may be called an adventure."

"Why surely you have not been practicing that all day?" rejoined the other with a laugh.

"Ay, but I have. I have not been three miles from home all day; and what is more, I let a deer run by me without even lifting my rifle. The most active feat I have performed is the one you have just witnessed."

"But how is this, Albert?" inquired the dark-eyed Rose, with a slight shade of uneasiness perceptible on her usually sunshiny countenance. "Are you not well?"

"Why, yes, I believe so—that is, I am not sick; but, somehow, I feel depressed in spirit, as though something of solemn import were about to happen. I do not know why it is; I have never felt so before."

"I have felt so twice," returned Rose, her dark eyes filling with tears at the recollection. "Once, the night before my own dear mother died; and the second time, the day of the dreadful battle in which my poor father perished."

"Poor Rose!" said Albert tenderly, "do not weep —for somehow when I see you weep, it makes me

feel womanish myself. Do you think then, Rose, that my peculiar feelings today are an omen of impending calamity?"

"God forfend," replied the other earnestly.

"I have half thought so myself," pursued the young man uneasily. "Oh! I do wish I could persuade father not to live so exposed and so defenseless. The savages are making encroachments in every direction, and who knows but they will be this way next! Good heavens!" he continued earnestly, "What if I should return some evening and find you all murdered. Oh! The thought is horrible—it is appalling even to imagine it!"

"Then why do you leave us, dear Albert, and so expose yourself, alone in the woods, far from any habitation? Oh! If you but knew the painful anxiety it causes me, when you do not make your appearance at the usual hour! Who knows but you may be killed in the forest, either by wild beasts or savages, and then what would become of poor Rose Forester?"

This was uttered in that artless, almost childish simplicity of manner and tone that a fond sister would naturally use in addressing a dearly beloved brother. And the response of the young man was in keeping; for he drew the fair creature to him and imprinted a kiss upon her ruby lips.

"Nay, dearest," he said, "do not be alarmed on my account. I have no fears for myself."

"But I have for you" she returned, "and for you only."

"Bless you, my little Rose!" Then musing seriously a moment, he added: "But you must not remain here, Rose. If father will persist in living thus exposed

to savage attack, I must provide a place of safety for you; for it seems as if on your welfare my own existence depends. I will take you over to Baker's fort, on the opposite side of the river, where you will be comparatively safe."

"What, and leave my adopted parents, brother and sister behind—and you—you also, Albert?"

"But I will go with you, Rose; and will try to persuade Mary and mother to go, also."

"Well, if they consent, I will; but, if not—"

"Ah, Rose, promise me that you will consent, whether they do or not."

"To go with you, Albert?"

"Yes."

"But — but —" said the other hesitatingly, and looking downward, while the warm blood mounted to her temples, and made her look in truth the "Forest Rose" he was fond of calling her.

"But what?" asked the young hunter, eyeing her fondly.

"But you know we are not really brother and sister," was the timid reply, "and people might think strange of such a proceeding."

"Ah! I see!" he rejoined with a slight start of surprise. "I see! I have overlooked one thing."

Then, gazing upon her fondly, while he gently took her hand and seated her on the log, he continued speaking as if from his train of thoughts, rather than in connection with what had gone before.

"But why should it not be, dearest Rose—ay, why should it not be? We have been playmates from childhood and know each other as well as we know our own selves. The time has come when you need a

protector; and who shall fill that place but me? For years, Rose, I have loved you—for years I have fancied that my love has been returned. Why then should we put off the day of our union? Nay, let us at once be united in those holy bonds which will bind us to each other for life. Then, wherever I may go, you may follow, without a blush of shame. What say you, my Forest Rose—shall I name the day?"

"As you will," replied the maiden, modestly, but frankly, raising her dark eyes, moist with tears of joy, to those of him who addressed her. "You know I love you, Albert; and if our kind parents will consent, I know no reason why the solemn ceremony may not be performed now as well as at a future time."

"Let this, then, seal the pledge between us!" cried Albert, in an ecstacy of delight; and again his lips were pressed to those of the fair girl at his side.

For a few minutes they sat conversing, when, suddenly looking up, Albert said:

"See! The sunlight is fading and night is approaching. Let us go to the cabin."

As they went down the hill together, he continued: "But, Rose, I forgot to ask you the news of the day. Has any one been over from the fort; or has any stranger called at our cabin?"

"No one," answered Rose, and then immediately added: "But, I was forgetting. There was a stranger here soon after you left in the morning. At first we were somewhat alarmed, taking him for an Indian, but on close inspection we concluded he was a white man, tanned as dark as an Indian, and completely covered with animal skins. He carried a rifle over

his shoulder, and in his belt were a tomahawk and a hunting knife."

"What did he want?" demanded Albert quickly, and with a shade of uneasiness.

"He merely asked for a cup to dip up some water from the creek."

"Did he seem to examine the house or surroundings?"

"He looked at everything closely, and completely stared me out of countenance."

"Why did you not mention this before, Rose?"

"Why I have not thought of it since the man went away, and should not have recalled it now, but for your question. But why do you look so concerned; is there anything remarkable about what he did?"

"Perhaps not; but somehow I fear that he means mischief. There are a great many white renegades among the Indians; and I fear that he may be one of this class, sent out as a spy, to find some defenseless places where the Indians may take a few scalps without much danger to themselves. I have heard that there are roving bands not far distant."

"You alarm me!" said Rose, shuddering and unconsciously drawing closer to her companion.

"Did he seem to arrive from the fort, or to return toward it?" inquired the young man.

"No, when I first saw him he was coming down the opposite hill, and he went up the creek."

"Where were father and William?"

"At work on the hillside, plowing."

"Did he not go near them?"

"No, and now I remember he seemed anxious to

avoid their seeing him—though I think they must have observed him."

"This seems suspicious, and must be investigated," rejoined Albert uneasily.

By this time the lovers had reached the little knoll upon which stood the cabin; and, bidding Rose to go on to it, Albert proceeded to the creek, where his father and brother, having quit work for the day, were watering the cattle.

Between the captain and his eldest born there was not that harmony of feeling that one would desire to see between father and son. This was owing, in a great degree, to Albert's indolence regarding anything like labor, and his passion for hunting, thus throwing all the work of the farm upon the shoulders of the elder Maywood and his younger son, a stout youth of nineteen. There was no quarrel, however between them—no actual disagreement, unless it were on the subject of the block-house, already referred to; but, at the same time, there was a certain reserve and constraint of manner toward each other, when they met or were together, that was anything but pleasant to the other members of the family, particularly to Rose and the mother of Albert, who desired above all things, to have perfect harmony of feeling between all parties.

As Albert approached his father who was standing on the bank of the creek watching the cattle drink, the latter merely turned his head sufficiently to see the former, and then without speaking, again fixed his eyes upon the water.

"Good evening, father!" said the young man, in a bland and rather deferential tone.

The captain grunted a good evening, but without again turning his head, or changing his position in the slightest degree.

"Did you see a stranger here today?" inquired Albert.

"No, I have no time to see strangers," was the rather surly reply. "It is enough for me to do the work of the farm, without entertaining strolling vagabonds. I must leave them to such as have leisure to play the gentleman."

"You seem in a bad humor tonight, father, and your words contain a good deal of bitterness," replied the young man, reddening. "I know you allude to me as the person playing the gentleman; though I am not so certain that the task I perform is easier, or more gentlemanly than yours. It is different, and more to my liking, and in my opinion, fully as profitable. The skins I have sold the past year have brought many a little luxury for our family, which otherwise we must have done without."

"Well," returned the other, in the same cold manner, "you know you are at liberty to do as you please; and so I suppose you will continue your profitable occupation."

"I certainly shall until I see fit to change it," replied the other, with some asperity, vexed in spite of himself. "I know I am at liberty to do as I please, for I am of age, and my own master; and, if you feel annoyed at my remaining here, I will take little Rose, and start for a settlement, where she will be in safety at least."

"Ah! Why do you mention Rose in particular?" demanded the captain sharply, turning full upon his son. "What have you to do with her?"

"Much. We are engaged to be married."

"Indeed! And how long since was such an engagement entered into?"

"Some half an hour."

The captain made no reply to this, but turning to the cattle, commenced whipping them out of the water, with a spirit that showed that his mind was not in a very tranquil or enviable state.

"I suppose I may have your consent to the union?" pursued Albert, following his father down the stream toward a log barn that stood just below the knoll, where the cattle were to be unyoked and fed.

"Why, you know you are independent of me and can do as you please," was the reply. "Though I own I am a little surprised at her choice. But it does not follow that sensible girls will always fancy industrious young men—otherwise your brother might have been a dangerous rival."

"Father!" exclaimed Albert, with a degree of energy that amounted almost to fierceness. "Father! I respect you—but I cannot bear these slurs. Either you must address me as a father should a son, who has been guilty of no dishonor, or I will go away, never to return. I am sensitive, and you know it; and your sarcasm is harder for my proud nature to bear than would be a blow from your hand. I do not despise labor, nor those who toil; but the life of a husbandman is uncongenial to my nature, taste, and education, and I will not follow it, so long as I can make a living in a more agreeable way. It is

folly to suppose that each person can pursue the same occupation with equal zest. What suits one does not another; and God has wisely provided man with as many honest ways of living as there are varieties of dispositions and likings. I traverse the woods, and kill deer, bears, panthers, and sometimes a buffalo; and I find a ready market for their skins with the traders who make their annual and semi-annual rounds at the larger settlements, and with the proceeds I purchase tea, tobacco, salt, and such stuffs for clothing as are useful in the family. All these things I bring home reserving nothing for myself but what is absolutely necessary—such as powder, lead, and the like. This is labor, and I do not see why it should not be considered as useful as plowing, planting, or hoeing. Nor is this all. While you and my brother supply the family with vegetables, potatoes, and grain, I supply them with the best meat the forest affords. Now say, father, do I not do my share?"

"If you think so, I suppose it is all right," replied the other doggedly.

The young hunter turned away with a vexed and rather grieved expression of countenance; but after having gone a few steps, he suddenly stopped, and returning to his father, earnestly inquired:

"You say you did not see a stranger here today?"

"I have said so. Shall I declare it more positively, and for the third time, or will two declarations to that effect be deemed sufficient?"

"But there has been one here, father," pursued Albert, chafing at the other's manner and language, yet striving to keep down his hasty and rising temper, "for Rose told me so."

"Well, what if there has! I see nothing remarkable in it," was the cold response.

"Nothing remarkable, perhaps, though there may be something dangerous in it, judging from what Rose said of the fellow's appearance and actions."

"You are always fancying danger," replied the captain, entering the rude barn to bring out some feed for his cattle, which he had by this time unyoked and turned loose in a picketed yard, where stood also some fifteen or twenty cows, with half the number of sheep, and four or five horses—all of which had come in, as was their custom, to be out of the way of the wolves. "Yes, you are fancying danger," he repeated, as he reappeared with a few ears of corn and an armful of hay. "But what danger do you apprehend now?"

"Why, I fear this fellow may be a white renegade, acting as a spy for the Indians; and something tells me that danger is lurking near."

"Pshaw! I have no fear whatever. We have been here over two years now; and if the Indians meditated an attack, we should have had it before this."

"It does not follow, father, for there are no Indians in this quarter; and our cabin being retired, as one may say, from their usual war-paths, they may not have discovered us. But depend on it, when they do, innocent blood will be shed, unless we take the proper precautions to guard against it. Oh, father! Suppose a party of scouting Indians should come down upon us suddenly, while you and William were at work in the field, and murder mother, Rose, and sister Mary! Oh, my God!" he pursued, shuddering at the thought, "it would be awful, awful!"

"Yes, we can suppose a great many awful calamities," returned the other; "but since we are supposing, why is it not just as easy to suppose we shall not be molested at all—by far the more reasonable, in my opinion, and certainly the more agreeable supposition of the two. But what do you propose, for I see you have some proposition to make?"

"Why if you would but act upon my suggestion, we could very soon have a block-house erected, contiguous to the cabin, on the same knoll, with a picketed passage from one to the other, and a heavy door to the former; so that in case of surprise, the females could retreat within there, and be safe till alarm might be given, and assistance procured."

"Harping on the same old subject yet, I see," returned the other. "I tell you, Albert, it is all foolishness, and I will not hear to it. People may laugh at me for my theory regarding the savages, as much as they please; they may call me insane, if they like, as I have heard they have more than once done already; but I have put my theory in practice, tried it for two years and over, and I see less reason to change it now than ever. People said we should all be murdered within six months; but we are all living yet, and likely to continue so, as far as the savages are concerned."

"Godsend we may!" returned Albert, "but somehow I have my fears. At all events, if you will take no precautions for safety, I shall take the liberty of removing Rose to some fortified place—and that so soon as she is my wife."

"Of course, you can do what you please with your

own wife," rejoined his father, "and if you are afraid to remain here, no doubt it will be a prudent move."

"For myself," replied Albert, his eyes flashing with ill-suppressed anger, "I have no fear; but the man who wantonly risks the life of a wife, mother, or child to gratify a foolish caprice, I hold responsible for their safety; and if harm befall them, through his wilful negligence, I shall consider their blood upon his head!"

Saying this, and without waiting a reply, Albert strode away, ascending the knoll, and in no very amiable mood, entered the humble cabin.

"I can do nothing with father," whispered the young man to Rose, "but tomorrow early, I will set off on the stranger's trail."

"Ah, dear Albert! I fear to let you go, for you might fall in with the enemy, if enemy it be, and be killed or captured."

"Fear not, my Forest Rose; for the lessons I have had from that daring hunter, Lewis Wetzel, have well prepared me for the duty I shall have to perform. Fear not for me; but do not venture out of doors oftener than is absolutely necessary during the day, as somehow I have a strange presentiment of danger."

The entrance of the captain here put an end to all further conversation for the time being, and, carefully putting away his rifle, the young man prepared himself to join in the frugal repast which his mother now announced to be ready.

Chapter II

THE HUNTERS

The wilderness, like the ocean, has its grandeur, beauty, and sublimity. The boundless expanse of woods, and the boundless expanse of waters, inspire much the same feeling of awe in him who is alone in the depths of the one or alone on the bosom of the other. Both speak, in a voiceless language of the great Framer and Maker; and man, alone, in solitude, with no human being near, is strikingly impressed with his own littleness and insignificance when compared with the mightiness of what surrounds him.

Probably there is no spot in the universe where man can be placed so calculated to inspire him with lofty contemplation as in the depth of the great primeval forests of America. Here he is literally alone with Nature and Nature's God; no human habitation near; no jarring sounds of human discord to distract his thoughts or disturb the quiet harmony of all around him.

Thus at least thought our hero, as he stood leaning against a large old beech tree, with the barrel of his faithful rifle resting in the hollow of his left arm and the breech on the ground, surveying a scene almost matchless for quiet beauty and solemn grandeur. It was a level tract of country, covered with giant trees that had stood for centuries, whose huge trunks seemed to rise like pillars of a great temple expressly

to support the Gothic canopy of leaves overhead, through which, though broad noonday, scarcely a single ray of the warm meridian sun penetrated. At this precise spot there was little or no undergrowth; and the eye could range through long vistas or avenues of trees, in every direction, till lost in the distance. Occasionally, from the boughs of a mighty tree, depended a long, beautiful grapevine, as if for tasselings to those green coverings of naturefi or as figured gateways to those closing vistas.

It was just the season of the year, too, to make everything look beautiful. The leaves varied in their shades of green and many colored blossoms mingled with them, as if to show how far the works of nature can surpass the art of man in all that is most fascinating to the eye. Dark green grass had sprung up, covering the earth with a soft carpet, and hiding the decaying leaves of the old year; and lifting their pretty faces above the green blade, were ten thousand wild flowers, of all varieties and colors. In fact, the spot had more the appearance of an enchanted ground —the abode of fairies—than of an absolute wilderness of terror, where stealthy savages lurked and wild beasts prowled.

Save the deep, solemn roar of the forest, which none who has heard can ever forget, all would be still for a time; and then some feathered songster would pour forth its artless strain, and a thousand others would join in, as if in chorus. Then there would be a fluttering among the leaves, and hundreds of bright plumed birds would shoot through the air, as if to change places with one another. Then for a moment all would be still again. Then tap, tap,

would sound the woodpecker, and suddenly more than fifty squirrels would dart along the ground, in every direction, and up the trunks of trees, where they would pause to look around them—half in fear and half in defiance—and then would quickly disappear into the tree-tops, perhaps to repeat the same scene a few minutes later. Then hop, hop would come a rabbit, with his ears erect, ready to catch the slightest sound of danger, and halting, ever and anon, would suddenly dart away and disappear. Then the forest would roar louder, and the breeze would freshen, and the leaves would rustle, and the birds would flutter and sing, and the squirrels would chirrup and dart down the trees, and away in every direction, and up others, and the whole wood for a short time would seem alive. Then all would gradually die away and nothing but the deep, far-off solemn roar would be heard like the distant sound of the ocean waves, or some mighty cataract filling the mind with a grand, exalted solemnity.

For more than a quarter of an hour Albert stood motionless as we have described him, watching the movements of the animal and feathered tribes, listening to the various sounds, but with his mind dwelling on other and more serious matters. He had followed the trail of the stranger to this place—a distance of six or eight miles from the cabin—and as it still led off farther into the great forest he had come to the conclusion that it might be that of a peaceful hunter and consequently had resolved to pursue it no longer.

Although living in the wilderness for a couple of years, Albert had fortunately escaped falling in with hostile Indians; yet he had more than once been in

company with a celebrated Indian hunter from whom he had learned many valuable lessons, not only in regard to the customs and habits of the savages and the manner of trailing them, but also in regard to the general science of the forest—if we may be permitted the expression—for that it is a science, and no trifling one, we think no one who has been familiar with a thoroughbred woodsman, witnessed his movements, or ever heard him relate his adventures will seek to deny.

In this way, and through constant practice also, Albert had become, in appearance, habits, and knowledge, what he professed to be, an accomplished hunter, so far as the term may be expressive of one who had never been engaged in stratagem or deadly conflict with the native red man of the woods.

He wore a green hunting frock, the skirt of which reached a little more than half-way from the hip to the knees. To this, unlike most hunting frocks of that period, there was no cape with fringe of different colors; but around the neck, along the edges, and around the wrists, was a narrow binding of black, fancifully set off with devices of beads, which, having been wrought there by the fair fingers of little Rose Forester, had a value in the eyes of Albert far beyond that of mere ornament. The coat, too, fitted the handsome form of the wearer neatly, and displayed the outlines of his straight, tall symmetrical figure to the best advantage. Around his waist was buckled a dark leather belt on which were distinctly worked initials of his name with beads, and by the same fair hand that had placed them on his coat. A sheath to this belt, on the left side, contained a long knife with

a buck-horn handle protruding ready to the hand. Over the coat, and under the left arm, hung the powder-horn and bullet-pouch. The breast of the coat was made rather full, and contained a large pocket in which were carried flint, steel, punk, jerk, corn-bread, and such other little notions as might be found useful in case the young man should take a fancy to camp in the woods—a thing he rarely did, and for reasons already mentioned. Buckskin breeches, with leggings and moccasins of the same, completed his nether dress. A cap, made from the skin of some wild animal, with the hair on, covered his head.

While standing there, lost in a kind of reverie, Albert felt a hand upon his shoulder, and, as may naturally be conjectured, he made a bound forward, clutching his rifle almost convulsively, and, with all the dexterity he was master of, turned it upon his supposed enemy. But the latter had taken care to place the trunk of the beech between himself and the other, so that nothing of his person was visible; and as Albert, more rash than wise, ran around the tree to get a sight of him, he avoided being seen, by moving around the trunk also, in perfect time with the other, as one point of the circumference of a wheel revolves with another. In vain Albert went faster or slower—turned back suddenly or suddenly darted ahead—he could only get a glimpse of the garments of his strange antagonist. What he did see led him to believe it was an Indian, for he appeared to be covered with untanned skins worn with their hair outside. At length, wearied with his attempts to get a full view of the stranger, Albert poised his rifle,

and commenced backing slowly toward a large ash. Just as he reached it he saw what he fancied the head of the other protruding beyond the tree, as if to get a glance at his own position; and ready to take advantage of the least thing in his favor, he fired on the instant.

But instead of a groan, as he had expected, a low, quiet laugh was the response to his skill as a marksman. The next moment the stranger deliberately stepped from behind the tree, and holding his cap in his hand, pointed to the bullet-hole in the crown, and said, with a laugh:

"Young man, you're some at a shot; but you've got a heap to larn afore you git to be master o' the woods."

The speaker was a large, muscular, bony-framed man, apparently thirty to five-and-thirty years of age. He was slightly shorter than our hero, being some three inches short of six feet in height, and of a build which, without being in the least symmetrical, gave indications of great physical strength and considerable activity. His shoulders were very broad and a little rounded, so that his head was thrown forward beyond the line of the perpendicular. His arms were heavily muscled, and his legs, somewhat too long for beauty, were none too long for service, as on more than one occasion they had demonstrated to his satisfaction, when a panting and blood-thirsty foe was in pursuit. His skin, naturally dark, had been so tanned by constant exposure, as to give it a hue not much removed from that of a native Indian, when seen without paint. His features were bold and coarse. The face was long and rather thin, with a large nose, and prominent cheek bones. His hair

"Young man, you're some at a shot; but you've got a heap to larn afore you git to be master o' the woods."

was jet black. His eyes were black, rather small, keen, and intelligent. The whole countenance had a singular mixture of frankness, deceit, good nature, and ferocity; and these conflicting expressions clearly indicated his character—the good prevailing toward his friends—the bad toward his foes. His attachments were strong and lasting, and his dislikes were bitter and vindictive—the former being displayed toward friends of his own race or color, which was white—the latter toward his mortal foe, the red man, to whom he was never known to show mercy.

The costume of this singular personage was in keeping with his peculiarities, being a mixture of the whites and savages. He wore a hunting frock of coarse stuff, with trimmings of wampum, and sleeves of panther skin, with the hair outside—those which originally belonged to it having evidently been worn out, and these coarsely sewed on as substitutes. Around his waist was a wampum belt, through a couple of slits in which were stuck a knife and the handle of a tomahawk, the steel in both cases being bare. To this belt, also were attached several Indian scalps—trophies of his victory over his mortal foes. His legs were encased in skins, rudely sewed together, with the hair outside and on his feet he wore the usual moccasins of the hunter. The only parts of his person which were completely bare were his hands, face, and neck, a portion of his breast, from which the coat was thrown back, as if for greater freedom and expansion. There was apparently little in his appearance prepossessing or attractive; but no sooner did young Maywood hear his voice, and get a distinct

view of his person, than he sprang forward with hand extended, exclaiming:

"Why Louis Wetzel, who in the deuce could think of its being you! I was certain some painted scoundrel of the woods was after my scalp."

"You put it in a powerful unsafe place, then," observed the other, giving the young man a good-natured grip with his horny hand. "A powerful unsafe place, I tell ye—leaning up agin that tree thar, with all the idees inside out traveling the Lord knows whar. Why, if you'd bin a red nigger now, I'd bin as sartin to hev had that thar top-knot hangin' to my girdle afore this, as I am to hev a hole through this here wild-cat,"pointing to his cap, which was nothing more than the skin of one of those animals stuffed to resemble life, with an opening in the lower side just large enough, and deep enough to admit the owner's head a few inches. "It won't do, lad—it won't do," he continued reprovingly. "Ef all I've told ye, and showed ye, only comes to this, it 'ud be best you didn't know nothin', an' then maybe you'd hev sense enough to stick to the settlements. You may shoot well, but you're powerful near-sighted an' hard o' hearin' when tha's danger about."

"But I was not dreaming of a surprise," returned Albert, "and so of course was not on my guard."

"No, you warn't dreamin' of a surprise, maybe—but you war o' sumthin' else—which I tell ye, Albert, won't do in the woods. Now I seed you for ten minutes afore I touched ye, an' half o' that time I had Kill-nigger here (holding up a long, beautiful rifle) bearin' right on ye, afore I could see your face. 'Spose now I'd bin a Shawnee, arter scalps, or you'd bin one

o' them animals yourself—why you'd a bin cold meat long afore this."

"But how happened you to find me, friend Wetzel?"

"Why partly in the way o' business an' partly by way o' accident. I's ashapin' my tracks over this a-way, when, at Cooney Creek, 'bout five miles off, I fell on to the trail of a small party of the inemy, an' I follered on in the hopes o' gettin' a chance to raise thar hair; but so fur I've been disappointed. About two hundred yards from here I lost thar trail, an' while huntin' fer it, I spied you, an' arter I'd made you out to be Albert Maywood, I thought I'd jest drop down an' take you along—arter I'd had a little sport first—bein' as how the trail leads your way."

"My way! Good heavens! What do you mean?" cried Albert, in alarm, seizing an arm of the other, and looking earnestly into his face.

"Why, it's jest so, an' thar arn't no use to deny it," replied Wetzel, coolly. "I've followed the varmints from Cooney Creek, as I said afore, an' they've come straight here, an' if they've gone straight on they'll not pass fur from your house, one side or t'other."

"By heavens, then, let us follow them with all haste!" cried Albert, greatly excited. "Something tells me they have gone down to murder our family. Oh, God! If such be the case, I shall go mad! Come, come! We must not stand idle here, and our friends in danger! Lead the way, Lewis! Lead the way quick, in the name of humanity!"

The other immediately set off on one of those peculiar Indian lopes for which he was remarkable, and which, though he did not appear to run fast, required all the other's agility to keep him company. On

reaching the spot where the trail was broken, the two hunters commenced an eager search for it. The cause of its being broken was apparent at a single glance to one as well skilled in Indian stratagem as Lewis Wetzel. A long grapevine hung suspended from a large oak; and it was evident that the savages, either knowing they were or fearing they might be pursued, had each in turn used this as a swing to set themselves several feet in advance, without leaving the print of a moccasin upon the earth. All Albert and Wetzel had to do, therefore, was to beat around a circle of less than fifty feet in diameter till they found it.

With men as eager on the search as were our hunters, this did not occupy many minutes, and Wetzel soon exclaimed:

"Here it is, as I'm a white gintleman, an' the devils head off just as I feared."

"On, then, in the name of God," cried young Maywood almost wild with excitement. "There is no need of our following the trail any longer, since its direction is so clearly indicated. On, on to the cabin in all haste, and Godsend we may be in time to protect its inmates!"

Both started off again at the same rapid pace, and though difficult to hold conversation, a short dialogue was maintained between them.

"I have been fearful of this for the last twenty-four hours," pursued Albert, soliloquizing aloud, as much as addressing the other.

"Why so?" asked Wetzel in some surprise, partly turning his head, for he was somewhat in advance, but without in the least slackening his speed. "How

could you be fearful of a thing you didn't know nothin' about?"

"In the first place, I had a presentiment of it."

"A what?" demanded the other.

"A presentiment."

"What's that?"

"A forewarning of the mind—a dread of a calamity that comes over one with almost the power of reality."

"Yes, yes—I've got the idee now, clar as a niggar's trail what runs rough-shod! Go ahead."

"I say in the first place, I had a presentiment, which lasted me all yesterday, so as to destroy my passion for hunting. On conversing with little Rose in the evening I learned there had been a stranger to the cabin during the day, whose appearance and actions, as described by her, led me to think him a renegade acting as a spy for the Indians, and this morning I set off on his trail, which I followed to the spot where you found me."

"I'll bet ten scalps to a pint of whiskey," returned the other, "that the same chap you've trailed is in this here party, for thar's a moccasin among 'em as toes out'ard, a thing a native don't never do."

"And how many do you suppose there are in this party?" inquired Albert.

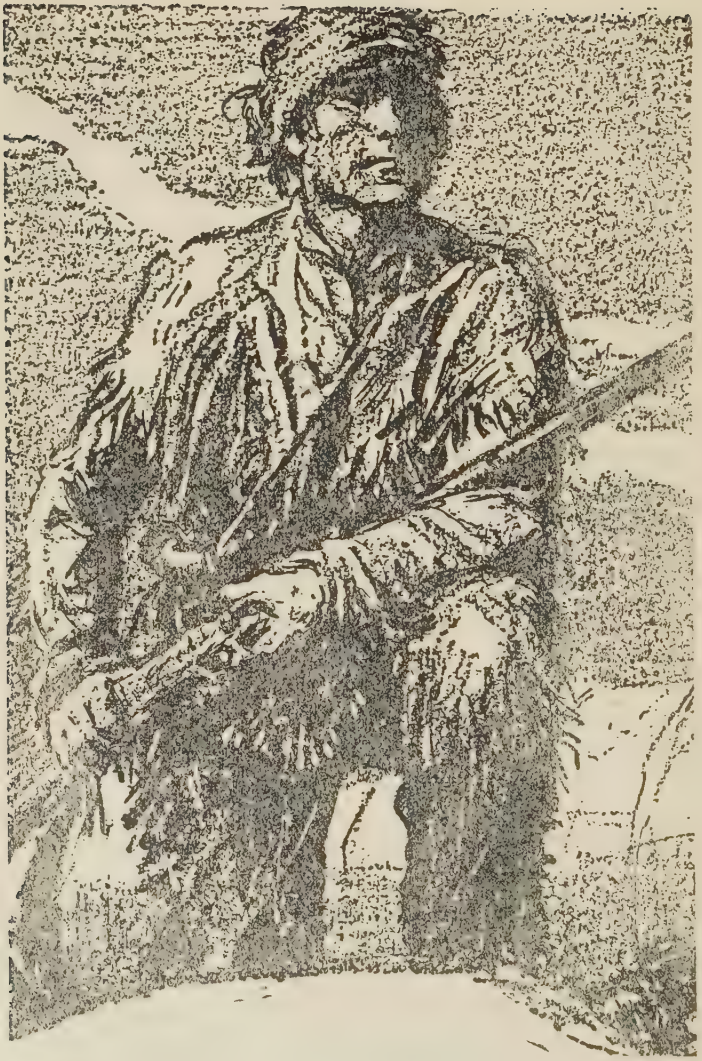
"I made out four—three Injins an' this other devil."

"Then I have hope," said Albert, "for the party being small, they would hardly venture an attack in broad daylight."

The conversation ended here, but the hunters still pursued their way with unabated zeal, and at the same rapid pace.

About a mile from where they set out, the ground, which had thus far been level as a floor, gradually became rough, broken and hilly, so that their speed was somewhat impaired. Still their progress was by no means slow, and in a little over an hour, all panting from fatigue, they ascended the hill whereon Albert and Rose had met the previous evening, and which, as the reader will remember, commanded a view of the valley in which Captain Maywood had located his dwelling.

As the two hunters burst through the bushes simultaneously to the clearing, where there was nothing to obstruct the vision, both uttered exclamations of horror at the same moment. Reeling like a drunken man, Albert staggered against Wetzel, who, catching him in his huge arms, gave a friendly support to his half-fainting form.



Chapter III

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

The sight which greeted Albert, on emerging from the forest to the clearing, was one well calculated to affect him seriously, even had he been an entire stranger, with no interest in the scene before him beyond the natural sympathy which one human being feels for another when overtaken by some awful, heartrending calamity; but with one so deeply connected with what he now beheld, it was a sight to freeze his blood and deprive his limbs of power to support him. The cabin and the barn were heaps of smoking ruins, and lying in front of the former, scalpless and gory, he could distinguish two forms, which he at once recognized as his father and brother. The sight sickened and made him faint, and for a couple of minutes he reclined in the arms of Wetzel who gazed gloomily upon the scene before him, but without uttering a single word.

Albert was the first to speak. Starting upright with a sort of spasmodic effort, he stretched his hands before him, and in a voice that seemed to issue from the very depths of his soul, ejaculated:

"Oh, God! My presentiment is realized—and all I love on earth are murdered!"

Saying this, he bowed his head in his hands and sank down upon the earth as one who could no longer endure the sight and the terrible agony it caused.

Wetzel drew his rough hand hastily across his eyes, and then, with a rude attempt at consolation, said:

"Don't give up everything afore you're sartin, Master Albert. It may not be so bad as it looks, an' it's not onlikely these here hell-hounds hev took some prisoners, an' the women may be livin'. Come, cheer up, an' let's go an' see."

"It is possible!" cried Albert, wildly springing to his feet as a ray of hope flashed through his mind that his mother and sister, and last, though by no means least, his Forest Rose, might have been spared and taken away captives. "It is possible you are right, Lewis, but we will soon know, and if wrong in your conjecture, I have but one favor to ask."

"What's that?" inquired the other as the two started down the hill together.

"That you will turn Indian for the once, and send my spirit after theirs."

"What!" cried the other with flashing eyes, "you'd die without revenge on these here imps of Satan?"

"No, no, Lewis—I had forgotten that. Yes, I see. I must live to avenge my murdered friends."

"In course you must, lad—in course you must. An' count on me to help ye; an' here's my hand, Master Albert, with my honor pledged that not a single one of all the cusses shall escape to tell thar doin's."

"So help me heaven!" cried Albert, seizing the extended hand of the hunter; "I swear to pursue them without mercy till either they or I have ceased to exist."

By this time the two had reached the foot of the hill, and ascending the knoll, Albert came upon the bloody remains of his father. He was lying on his

face, dead, with the scalp torn from his head, presenting a horrible spectacle. On turning him over it was found that a bullet had penetrated his heart—doubtless fired by some covert foe without warning.

As Albert gazed upon his mangled remains, and remembered the last conversation they had held together the evening previous, he could not avoid the exclamation:

"Alas, dear father, thou art the victim of misplaced confidence! We parted almost in anger—but God forgive thee all thy faults as I do," and he turned away, with a burst of grief, only to let his eyes fall upon the gory corpse of his brother, who had also been shot and scalped.

This last sight seemed to unnerve him; and sinking down upon the earth he took the cold hand of his dead brother in his own, and gave way to a paroxysm of sorrow and lamentation.

"I can go no farther," he said to Wetzel, who stood by his side, gazing upon him compassionately—neither, as it would seem, from some secret dread of finding their worst fears confirmed, having as yet ventured to search among the smoking ruins for the remains of others of the family. "I can go no farther: I can bear to see no more; and yet I am in an agony of suspense. Go you, my friend. Look among the smoking pile, and tell me what you see."

And, as the other turned away, he continued in a kind of soliloquy:

"Oh! My mother! My sister!—and little Rose!—where are you now; on earth or in heaven? Oh, God! Support me to learn their fate!" and dropping the cold hand of his brother, he again covered his face,

and rocked to and fro in agony of grief beyond the power of language to express.

In a few minutes Wetzel returned and stood silently by his side, his coarse, weather-beaten features wearing an expression of heavy gloom and heart-felt compassion. For several moments young Maywood did not appear to notice him, but kept rocking to and fro and moaning piteously. Then suddenly looking up, he exclaimed:

"Well! Speak! Are they there?"

"Be a man," returned the other, evasively, "and come with me and get your revenge."

"But you did not answer me," cried the other, springing to his feet, seizing Wetzel by the arm, and looking wildly into his face. "You did not answer me. Yet I am answered by your evasion. All gone—all murdered—oh, my God! my God!"

"I don't think all be gone," rejoined the other.

"Ha! Say you so? Who has escaped?"

"Can't say; but come here and look for yourself." Wetzel led Albert to the smoking cabin, and pointed among the charred and smoking logs to a couple of human bodies that lay side by side near the center of the space that had been occupied by the dwelling.

"My mother and sister," groaned the young man, again lowering his eyes and shuddering.

Then looking up suddenly he added:

"But, Rose! Rose!—where is she? I have seen nothing of her!"

"I'm in hopes she's escaped," said Wetzel.

"God be praised! Oh, God be praised! Quick my friend!—quick the trail—the trail!"

Wetzel sprang down the knoll, near the creek, and the next minute called to Albert:

"It's here! It's here! The varmints have gone down stream."

"Well, well—but what of Rose!"

"I don't see nothing of—yes, here's a white gal's mark, as I'm a gintleman."

Albert uttered a cry of joy and rushed to the spot.

"Where? Where? he eagerly demanded, examining the ground. "Ah, I see it now! Yes, you are right; these are her foot-prints, and she is a prisoner. Come let us away to her rescue!"

"But the dead?" hesitated the other.

"Ah, yes! I understand," replied the young man solemnly. "We cannot leave them thus, though we have no time to spare from the living. Ha! Yonder I see a spade that has escaped the general wreck! With this we must dig a grave and bury them."

"It'll be too hard on your nerves, lad. Let me do the buryin' business," returned the other, considerately.

"No! There is no time to spare, Wetzel. If you will be kind enough to bring down the bodies, I will throw out the earth here," and without waiting a reply, Albert stuck his spade into the ground where he stood, and proceeded to dig a grave, with the same eagerness he would have raised the earth from the body of a buried comrade, in whom the spark of life was supposed to be yet lingering.

But his mind was a sort of chaos, and distracted between the living, and the dead. He knew that all his family—father, mother, brother, and sister—had been murdered, and that he was now at work

upon their tomb. Yet, somehow, it seemed to him he could not realize the awful calamity, for one had escaped, and in that one his soul was centered, and all his thoughts bound up. He loved his parents, brother, and sister—but, as we have before shown, he loved Rose too. Had she fallen, as he first believed, life would indeed have been a blank; but she had escaped and there was something for him to live for yet. He deeply grieved for his family. But his thoughts were divided between the living and the dead, and thus the blow was softened of its crushing force, and he was able to bear up under it. All apparent weakness and irresolution had left him, and his features had assumed the severe expression of stern resolve. Laboring with the spade as if his life depended upon his exertions, he soon had an excavation made large enough to contain the bodies, which Wetzel had already brought to the spot.

"Now go!" said the latter, as Albert leaped from the hole. "Go! It's too much for you—I know it is—an' I'll put the bodies in an' kiver 'em up decent."

"No," answered Albert sadly. "I should never forgive myself were I to shrink from performing this last sad duty. I feel strangely, Wetzel. My head feels light, but my nerves are steady, and therefore I will not turn from the solemn task."

The two hunters then proceeded to raise the dead slowly and solemnly, one at a time, and place them, side by side, uncoffined, in the rude grave. This done, both uncovered their heads, and, standing on the brink of the last earthly home of those who had been so suddenly summoned to judgment, gazed solemnly down upon their mortal remains.

"Alas!" groaned Albert, making a great effort to be calm but unable to subdue his emotions, and burst into tears. "Alas! Here lie all my family in a bloody grave, with no chaplain nigh to say the last sad rites that belong to the dead. Oh! My dear mother, and father, and brother, and sister! Must I bid you all farewell so soon, to behold you no more on earth? Oh! It rends my heart and overwhelms me with sorrow."

"Come," whispered Wetzel, "we can't benefit the dead, an' surely the livin' hev got a claim on us."

"Right, my friend!" cried Albert, starting at the thought. "Poor little Rose is even now perhaps calling on me to protect her. Farewell!" he said, waving his hand mournfully over the grave and turning away. "Farewell, all! God rest your souls in peace!"

Wetzel seized the spade, and as Albert stepped aside to give vent to his grief he threw the loose earth upon the mangled bodies; and in a brief space they were forever buried from human observation. Then, touching Albert on the shoulder, he pointed to the trail, clasped his rifle firmly, and said, in a low, firm tone:

"Come!"

Albert cast an eager, anxious look around him, and perceiving that the grave was covered, he approached it, and, kneeling upon the soft, loose earth silently prayed to the great Author of all for peace to the souls of the departed, for strength to bear up under his affliction, and for success to crown his efforts in rescuing her whom he loved from the bloody hands of those who had murdered his relatives. This over, he sprang to his feet, and seizing his rifle, rushed into

the thicket, where he was promptly joined by Wetzel.

The trail here was broad and open, as if the enemy had left it so intentionally. After pursuing it a short time through the thick brushwood which, for a considerable distance, lined the banks of the little stream that ran murmuring by with its pure forest song, as if no sounds but those of gentle harmony had ever disturbed its solitude, the old hunter suddenly came to a halt, much to the surprise of his companion, who, pressing eagerly after, was thus brought forcibly in contact with him.

"What now?" demanded Albert impatiently, for his thoughts were all with Rose.

"Hist!" said the other. "Speak lower, or you'll never larn to make a woodsman fit to trail Injins. To tell the honest truth, I don't like this here trail—it's got too pokerish to suit an old hunter like me."

"What do you see wrong?"

"Why, the red-skins hain't taken no pains to conceal the way they've traveled, an' that arn't Injin, unless they want to be followed, an' then it's jest Injin, cuss 'em! an' nothin' else. Now the varmints knew well enough they didn't kill all your family, for they've seen your trail leadin' off from the house, you may depind, an' by that they know'd you'd follered off that thar white devil, an' in course that some time you'd come back, an' findin' all your family killed, 'cept one, that you'd naterly take off arter her, an' so they've left this here track open a purpose, an' ye may depind they've got an ambush down here, somewhars, an' are makin' desperate calkilations on gittin' your scalp. D'ye understand now?"

"I do," replied Albert. "But what is to be done?

We can't remain here, and, of course, you don't think of giving up the pursuit?"

"Give up thunder!" replied the other. "See here, young man, you've heerd me pledge my honor on't that I'd not rest till every hound on 'em war dead; an' ef you suspicion my oath or honor, you'll give a mortal offense, an' make me your inemy instead o' your friend."

"I crave your pardon!" returned Albert. "I meant not to doubt your word or your honor in the least. I took it for granted we could not give up the pursuit, and so asked what we were to do."

"Well, that's all right, that's all right," replied the other, all traces of anger disappearing. "I see ye didn't mean nothin' offensive, and I oughten't to tho't so, being's you're half dead about your folks, an' this other little gal. Now I've been arter the Injins purty much all my life, so that this may be said to be my nateral vocation, an' I know thar tricks jest as well as I know whar Killnigger's going to when I pint her, an so ef they thinks as how they can circumvent me, let 'em think so an' be—! Thar's no doubt in my mind but they'll diskiver thar mistake jest about the time they'll miss thar cussed top-knots. Now I'll tell ye what we've got to do; we've got to leave this here trail, an' make a circuit an' come in upon 't again somewhat lower down—that is ef we can—an' ef we can't we'll know purty sartin we've left the red niggers above."

"But this will delay us from finding Rose," said Albert, hastily, to whom every moment seemed an age.

"An' wouldn't a rifle-bullet do as much?" quietly

queried the other. "I tell you what 'tis, young man—you've got a heap to larn yit about the woods an' Injins, ef you think anything can be done by hurrying in a sarcumstance like this. We've got to take our time, an' no mistake; an' we arn't to let the devils know we're arter 'em or we'll lose all. So come, let's make a sarcumlocation, as the chaps in the settlements say."

As he spoke Wetzel turned off from the trail, and striking across the thicket, ascended a hill to the right, and continued along its summit for more than half a mile, when he again descended into the valley. In this distance, short as it was, the nature of the ground had changed materially. The valley was still somewhat level, though it began to grow more uneven. The swampy thicket, in which our foresters had at first been buried, and wherein Wetzel feared an ambush, had already ceased, and an almost entirely different under-growth, above which a few maples and beeches over-shadowed the limpid waters of the little stream. A quarter of a mile further on the ground became broken and rocky and the water had a rapid descent for more than a mile when it again passed over a short level space, and buried itself in the bosom of the Captina. The place where our two hunters now descended to the valley had not the same advantages for an ambuscade as at the spot where they had quitted it; and moving forward cautiously, looking keenly at everything that stirred, and listening to every sound, they at length reached the creek without having perceived any traces of the Indians whatever.

"Now one thing out o' two is sartin," said Wetzel,

in a low guarded tone, peering cautiously around, "ayther these here vagabonds is atween this and whar we turned off o' that trail, or else they've turned into the creek an' broke it—an' then Old Nick himself, unless he seed 'em, couldn't tell which way they've gone. They're cunnin' varmints, is these here Injins, I tell you, an' no mistake. Now it's parfectly onpossible to tell whar they is now. They made a broad trail so as to be follered, you may depind on that; but for what purpose we've got to find out. It's likely they've come down so fur, an' got into the stream, an' gone back again, an' put off t'other way, jest to blind us. But I'll soon find out. Do you jes stay right here now, an' I'll go up an' reconnoitre. Ef you hear Killnigger speak, jest take car' of yourself; for you may depind on't it'll be number one amonst the critters, sure."

"But I will go with you," said Albert eagerly. "Shall it be said that I stood idle, with Rose in danger, and allowed another to go forward to her rescue alone? Never, Wetzel, never!"

"Now this sounds all very brave, an' the like, I 'spose; but it 'ud be powerful foolish to put it in practice jest at this time. No, no—I know what's best, an' so do you stay hereabouts, ready to come ef you're wanted. Depind upon it, I'll do my indivors to diskiver the varmints quietly, an' ef I find 'em I'll let you know in some way or other."

"But they might tomahawk poor Rose, if she is with them."

"Yes, an' they mought do the same thing ef you was along—so what's the odds! No, ef I fire on 'em at all, it'll hev a good effect—case why—thar'll be

sartin to be one of the red devils less, an' only hearin' one gun, an' thinkin' it was the chap they was ambushin'—that's you—d'ye mind!—at least two of the three that's left will set out to chase me. I'll run in course—load as I run—an' I'll lay 'em both cold, jest as sure as I'm a white gintleman, an' they're the red imps of Satan. Meanwhile, you can crawl around pick off t'other skunk, an' then we've got 'em safe, an' the gal in the bargain. D'ye understand now?"

"Yes—go on—I will remain here."

The other moved cautiously forward in the direction of the swampy thicket, and in a few minutes he was lost to the eye of young Maywood, who awaited the result of his adventure with all the impatience of a lover over whose mistress hung an awful uncertainty. Minute after minute went by, and still no Wetzel made his appearance. When a half hour had elapsed the suspense of our hero amounted to an agony little short of a new calamity.

At last he was just on the point of starting off in pursuit of the other, when Wetzel suddenly emerged from the thicket without any of that caution he had hitherto used.

"Well, what news?" inquired Albert, eagerly.

"Why the —— scamps hev gone, sure enough; but which way, the Lord knows better 'an me. I found thar trail agin, and followed it into the creek jest as I suspected, an' thar's an end on't."

"What are we to do then?"

"Well, I thought as how we'd go down below here a bit, an' maybe we may find whar they've come out. Sartin we can, ef they've come out this here way at

all, an' ef they haven't, we'll have to take up stream an' try 'em that way; they're orful cunnin' cusses."

"This is vexatious," rejoined Albert, "and harrowing to one's very soul. Alas! Alas! Poor little Rose! I fear I shall never behold thy sweet countenance again!"

"Don't go for to bein' discouraged this airly on the journey," returned the other, "fer it's likely we'll be days on the sarch afore we find 'em—more likely, I may say, nor that we'll find 'em sooner; but patience an' perseverance 'll do wonders sometimes. Thar's one consolation, however, that when we do find the scamps, thar'll some o' 'em git a taste o' cold lead right sudden, unless they've got sharper eyes an' be quicker on the trigger nor we is. So, come, Let's be a movin' again, for the sun's travelin' wesard right smart."

Albert needed no second invitation to be on the move, and the two again set off together at a much faster pace than heretofore.

"You keep this side o' the stream, an' your eyes right keen, and I'll take t'other," pursued the old hunter, and as he spoke he sprang across the creek.

In this manner our two friends followed the creek down to where it emptied into the larger one, without discovering a single sign of the broken trail. Then a consultation was held as to what should be done next. At the precise point where the stream they had followed entered the Captina, the latter was so shallow along the shore as to permit a person to wade it for a considerable distance. Observing this, a thought struck the old hunter that it might be possible to find the trail at the place where the water became

deep. Acting upon this idea, he left his companion, and went down stream several rods further.

The result was all he could have hoped, and a shout of triumph announced his success to Albert who bounded away to join him, with an answering cry of delight. The trail was again discovered, and our friends, elated at their good fortune, set off to pursue it, with renewed energies and spirits bounding with hope.

But little effort was now required to keep on the track of the enemy, for, doubtless feeling secure, they had made no further attempt to conceal their course. But though our friends hurried on, no Indians were brought in sight, and the sun went down just as they reached the mouth of the Captina, where it empties into the Ohio. Then the trail showed that the Indians had crossed the stream with their prisoner. Satisfied of this fact, our adventurers secured their powder horns to their rifles, and holding the latter above their heads dropped quietly into the water and swam across.

On reaching the other shore they again found the trail which they hastily followed for something more than a mile; but, darkness coming on, they thought it the wisest course to encamp where they were, and renew their pursuit with the first light that would permit them in the morning.

Chapter IV

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

That night was a sleepless one to Albert. It was necessary, in order to keep off the wild beasts which prowled around, that a small fire should be kindled; but our hunters not knowing in what proximity they might be to the savages they were pursuing, made this in the center of a dense thicket, a small circle of the brushwood being cut away for the purpose. By this means the light was prevented from reaching beyond the thicket, so that it was almost impossible that their discovery should be other than accidental.

Albert now produced what little food he had with him, of which both partook sparingly, reserving at least one-half with which to break their fasts on the morrow. This done, Wetzel sat a few minutes before the fire, conversing with his companion in low, guarded tones. Then, with the readiness of one habituated to the woods, and accustomed all his life to danger, he stretched himself upon the earth, and in less than five minutes was sleeping soundly—if, in fact, that sleep can be called sound from which the sleeper is aroused by the least unusual noise.

But Albert, as we have said, could not rest. A thousand maddening thoughts were chasing one another through his brain. He thought of his relations, those who were so near and dear to him, but who had suddenly been summoned to another world by the

murderous weapons of the savages. All, all were gone—butchered in cold blood. To his excited fancy, it seemed as if they came up before him, one by one, and called on him to avenge them on their inhuman destroyers. Then he thought of Rose—or rather he reverted to her distinctly—for in fact she was never absent from his thoughts. He pondered over her awful condition, wondered where she was, and strove to imagine what must be her feelings. She had doubtless seen her friends murdered, her home destroyed, and was now a captive herself, in barbarous hands—reserved, it might be, for even a worse fate than those who had gone to their last account. And would she not think of him she loved, who was even now on his way to her rescue, to whom her heart and hand were pledged, and mourn him as one lost to her forever? Perhaps she might even now be suffering some barbarous treatment and vainly calling on him to protect her—upon him whose heart's blood would readily be spilt in her defense—but who, under the present circumstances, and at the present time, could render her no aid whatever.

As these thoughts rushed through the mind of Albert, he felt he could not endure the suspense of waiting for daylight which would only come after the lapse of many hours, each one of which to him now seemed an age of torture. He arose from his sitting posture, and walked to and fro before the fire, occasionally glancing at his companion, and envying his sleep, yet wondering how he could pass to forgetfulness under such painful and exciting circumstances and especially after having witnessed such horrible scenes. But he overlooked the fact that

Wetzel had not the same interest in the bloody tragedy that he had himself, for no relatives of his had fallen there, that such and similar scenes were with him of every day occurrence, and that constant intercourse with acts of violence blunts the sensibilities.

After pacing back and forth some half an hour, in a state of mind easier to be conceived than described, Albert began to part the bushes, with the intention of passing out of the thicket. Scarcely had he touched them for this purpose when Wetzel sprang into a sitting posture, and, with the force of habit, laid his hand upon his rifle, while he glanced hurriedly around him.

"What is it?" he asked, seeing all was quiet, and no cause for alarm. "What was it as woke me so sudden?"

"I think you have been dreaming," replied Albert, "for I have heard no noise, other than the distant howl of a pack of wolves, and what I made myself in stirring the bushes here."

"That's it," rejoined Wetzel, "that's jest it, young man, an' nothin' else. I'm al'ays ready to fight Injins, awake or asleep an' when I heard ye stir them thar bushes, I must hev thought one o' the red hellions war close by. Hope I didn't skeer ye much, Master Albert; good night;" and thus, with a sort of apology, as it were, for having been disturbed himself, this remarkable hunter fell back to his place on the ground, and the next minute was in the land of dreams.

Albert now gave up his intention of leaving the thicket and stretching himself upon the earth, he

strove, with right good will, to imitate his sleeping companion, well knowing how necessary to his movements on the morrow, was a present rest to both body and mind. But his efforts to sleep were fruitless; and he rolled to and fro—got up and stirred the fire, threw on new fuel, occasionally walked back and forth. Thus he passed the night, hailing the first streak of morn with all the gloomy delight that may be imagined of one in his situation.

The morning broke bright and clear and the sun rose with a golden halo, as beautiful as though it were to shine upon an eternal paradise, instead of upon a world of sin, sorrow, lamentation, and woe. Long before it showed its welcome visage over the hills, however, Wetzel and his companion were stirring. First, looking carefully to their weapons, and repriming their rifles, lest the heavy dew had too much dampened the powder, they made a frugal breakfast on the remaining stock of food, and by the time it was light enough to see, both were prepared to set out in pursuit of the foe.

The fire of the night had completely dried their garments; but the bushes were so loaded with dew, that, on coming out of the thicket, they found themselves nearly as wet as before. But the weather was comfortably warm. Though, had it been otherwise, this would have been a matter of little or no consequence to men bent on so stern an errand as was theirs. On coming out of the thicket into the more open wood, they again found the trail without difficulty, and set forward with renewed energy. As the sun rose above the trees, and poured its golden flood through their dew-gemmed branches, and kissed

the bright flowers and blossoms, and made them lay bare their merry hearts, as it were to its coming, and as a thousand birds in concert sang their morning hymns in strains of matchless melody, Albert for a moment felt something like a softening ray penetrate his own gloomy soul. He could not but picture himself how delightful would have been this scene to him, had he witnessed it the morning before, when all his friends were well and enjoying the blessings of rosy health. But now, alas! A weight of woe lay upon his heart, and nothing in nature however beautiful or enchanting could awaken a single emotion of pleasure; though it would not be too much to say, perhaps, that he felt the presence of the All-prevading Spirit, and that it calmed in some measure the tempest within, and aided to revive a hope, which is to the mortal what heaven's great luminary is to the natural world, and without which the soul of a man would be buried in a rayless night of gloom. Nor was the morning, with its lovliness and "balmy breath," without its effect on Wetzel, who after pushing on some time in silence, suddenly looked up and said:

"Well, this here's a powerful nice day to begin with an' makes one feel as if he could foller them vagabonds a'most as much for pleasure as for revenge. But the cusses is travelin' fast, an' we hain't got no time to lose."

"And how do you know they are traveling fast?" inquired Albert.

"Know it by the tracks. Don't you see, now, that them steps is wide apart—an' little Rose's here, uncommon so for a female woman—but that for all, it

takes three of hern to make two of thar's. D'ye understand now?"

"Ah! yes," sighed Albert, "I understand. Alas! Poor Rose!"

"Hope they won't tire the gal out an' tomahawk her," observed the other.

"God forbid!" exclaimed Albert, almost beside himself with the thought. "Do you think there is any danger, Wetzel?"

"Why, with them cusses, a woman's never safe, in course, an' sich things hev bin done afore now. Sometimes, ye see, when they think they're follered, they put ahead like the devil, an' ef they happen to hev prisoners, an' they can't keep up, why, sooner nor let 'em go, they drive a hatchet in thar skulls, t'ar off thar scalps, an' leave thar carcasses behind to fatten wolves an' turkey buzzards on."

"Good heavens! You alarm me, with the horrible picture you draw."

"I can't draw pictures," replied the other taking the matter up literally. "But I can jest tell a backwoods native truth with any white gintleman as ever trod this here 'arth an' sot heel on any red nigger's windpipe—I can, by ——!"

"For heaven's sake, my friend! let us hurry forward, for somehow I begin to anticipate the worst."

"Well, tain't best to git skeerified, Master Albert, for that won't help things a bit. I've bin in a good many tight places myself; an' amongst other things, I've larned it's best not to cry afore you're hurt. It's nateral for one to go to trouble, I'll allow; but I've al'ays found it best to let trouble come to me, for it al'ays comes as soon as I want to see it. But about

pushin' ahead. I don't see no objections to that, so we'll travel jest as fast as sarcumstances will let us."

The hunters now moved with what speed they could through the dense forest, which seemed to darken at every step, until it became like twilight, owing to the matted covering of leaves overhead, through which the rays of sun, now full above the horizon, were unable to penetrate. The trail of the Indians was now due westward, with little or no deviation from a straight line, which led Wetzel to infer that they were aiming direct for their tribe, or the rendezvous of some large party already on the war-path, from which they had been sent out as scouts. If this were the case, and every circumstance seemed to confirm it, it would be necessary to overtake them before they reached the main party. As Wetzel thought of the possibility of failure, his dark eye grew sullen, a frown gathered on his brow, and his face expressed an anxiety unusual with one so schooled in maintaining, under all circumstances, a sort of equal outward composure.

This change in his countenance did not escape the anxious eye of his younger companion who turned to him occasionally with the same feeling of helpless dependence with which the lost mariner consults the compass on which his only hope is placed.

"What is it, Wetzel?" he inquired anxiously.

The other explained his fears in his own peculiar way, and the effect on the already half-distracted Albert may be readily imagined.

"O, God!" he groaned. "Poor Rose! What will become of her? But we must go faster, Wetzel—faster! Oh, that I had wings to fly to her aid!"

"Yes, them 'ud be powerful convenient to all on us in sich a case," replied the other. "But we hain't got wings, ye see, an' so we'll hev to do the best we can with our feet, an' ontil we can git into a leetle more open wood, I don't see as how we can make much improvement on the rate we're goin'. I tell you they must be travelin' fast, for, d'ye mind, we ain't come upon their last night's camp."

"Say no more!" cried Albert. "Say no more, or the thought will drive me mad, and my poor brain aches already."

After passing through some three or four miles of this dense, dark forest, which by the way was almost level, the ground again became broken, the wood more open and the trees of smaller growth, so that occasionally our friends could get a glimpse of sunshine, and were enabled to increase their speed materially. The sun was now more than an hour above the eastern horizon, and to the best of his judgment, Wetzel declared they had advanced some five or six miles since leaving their last night's encampment; but what was very singular, in his opinion, they had not yet come upon the encampment of the enemy.

"By heavens!" he exclaimed, "I do believe the cusses must hev traveled in the night, an' that's powerful singular for Injins, onless they knowed, or had strong suspicion, they war follered."

Our pursuers now came to a steep, rocky hill, resembling an artificial embankment, with an end, if we may so call it, presented toward them. The trail led directly up this, and on reaching the summit they were surprised to find it a narrow ridge, of not more

than a dozen yards in width, which gradually sloped off to its base on either side, and ran back a distance of not less than three miles, completely destitute of trees, and only covered with a low, scrubby fern, and some wild flowers and grass. The sides were like the top, covered only with low shrubs; but in the ravines, formed by the hills on either side, tall trees had grown up, their tops rising some eight or ten feet above this embankment, with others still behind them, as it were, layer after layer, each one rising higher, as it rose upon the retreating hills, presented a singular vista, and one both picturesque and beautiful. That this embankment was artificial seemed evident—though if so, it was hard to account for the huge rocks that lay exposed at the point where our hunters had ascended, looking as if they had recently been revealed by the washing of the rain.

Under favorable circumstances Albert would have paused to contemplate the singular scene now presented to his view; but in the present instance his mind was too much occupied with graver matters to think otherwise of it than as a means to accelerate his progress.

"We can gain on them here," he said, "and it behooves us to do our best."

"That's true," replied his companion, "that's true," and he immediately started off on his peculiar Indian lope—a mode of running in which he was greatly favored by his long legs.

Albert was naturally quick on foot but it made him pant excessively to keep up with Wetzel, who at the end of the embankment (for we must so call the ridge), a distance, as we have said, of three miles,

and which was made in less than half an hour. He showed no more signs of fatigue than a deer—a name, in fact, by which he was, even then, designated among the Wyandottes or Hurons—the Indian of it being Oughscanoto—and which had been fastened upon him on account of his great fleetness, not one of the nation ever having been successful in their effort to overtake him when once he had the start.

The termination or western end of the embankment, was much like the eastern, save that it descended into a deep ravine, which was neither more nor less than the meeting of the two ravines on either side of the ridge, and which the latter had made two by separation, as an island divides a stream. Into this ravine our friends entered cautiously—for it was very dark and gloomy—being covered with a thick growth of hemlocks, through which it was with no little difficulty that they could force their way. The ground was now descending and moist under their feet, and after having gone some few rods a small rivulet was spied trickling down the hill to the right, and almost at the same moment Wetzel, who was in advance, uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Here's thar 'campment," he said in an eager, but guarded tone, "an' I'm jest as glad to find it as a hungry nigger is to eat his dinner. I'd jest like to give a raal Injin whoop now, an' if thar's any o' the varmints in this quarter to let 'em know we're comin' arter 'em all right and tight, but then I knows it won't do, for it might 'danger and spile our journey."

"No! No! For heaven's sake, make no useless demonstration of either delight or disappointment,

my friend," responded Albert, hurriedly, as he joined his companion.

The last night's camp of the enemy had been found, sure enough, and a few brands of their fire were still burning, around which they had stretched themselves to rest. As Albert came upon the ground where little Rose had probably passed a sleepless night, like himself, he cast around eagerly for the spot, with all the ardent feelings of a lover. But he had not long to search. A stake, driven firmly into the earth at the outer edge of the closed circle, with the leaves and earth considerably pressed down around it, gave forth the painful intelligence that on this unhappy spot, the captive maiden had passed the previous night. And as if to furnish still further evidence of this, a small piece of ribbon that she had worn in her hair and which had been presented her by Albert, together with a short strip of deer-skin, were found just in the edge of the bushes. Albert seized both eagerly, and with all the wild, frantic devotion of a lover, he pressed the former to his lips a dozen times, repeating the name of her he loved in the most endearing terms, and then carefully placed it inside his vestments, next to his heart. A small piece of jerk was also found, which, tearing in half, Wetzel ate one part and handed the other to Albert, who refused it with a gesture of loathing.

"Well, ef you don't want it I do," said the hunter, and the next moment it had disappeared.

"Ah! Dear Rose, your captors shall pay dearly for this!" said Albert, looking at the stake to which she had been bound.

"We've got to find 'em first," observed the old hunter, "an' so let's take a drink here, and be on the move agin."

After quenching their thirst at the little rivulet, our friends set off again with renewed hope. The trail led down the bed of the ravine; but after pursuing it a short distance a new obstacle presented itself to a hurried progress. The little rivulet also flowed down the ravine, and in the distance of a quarter of a mile a dozen others joined in, so that it soon formed quite a stream—large enough, at all events, to admit the Indians again breaking the trails—a precaution they had by no means neglected.

"Ten thousand cusses on 'em," cried Wetzel, with a degree of passionate impatience Albert had never before seen him display. "Oh! Ef I only had 'em under the muzzle of Killnigger here, it 'ud jest be a sort o' everlastin' satisfaction to blow 'em all to thunder! Well, well, we must do the best we can under the sarcumstances; but ef ever I do git whar I can draw a bead on one on 'em, you may depind on seein' fun, or I'm no gintleman. Now, we'll hev to do jest exactly as we done afore—you take one side, an' keep your eye skinned, while I take t'other. It's maybe we'll be as lucky as we was afore, an' it's maybe not—thar's no tellin' nothin' about the caprices o' sich a set o' vagabonds as them, nohow."

Acting upon Wetzel's suggestion the hunters now divided as before, each taking an opposite side of the stream. In this way they followed it for more than a mile without discovering any further traces of the Indians, although every spot favorable to their coming out of the water had been carefully examined.

They now held a short consultation, and resolved to continue on a mile further, and if they still found no signs to retrace their steps and examine carefully all the way back. The bed of the stream, so far, had been hard and rocky; so that it was impossible to tell, by any signs they would have left behind, whether the enemy had followed it or not; but a mile or so further on the ground changed, became more level, and the bottom of the rivulet, or creek, (for this was one of the head branches of Will's Creek), grew soft, and then muddy. As soon as he came to this Wetzel examined the bottom closely, for some distance, and then, in his peculiar way, said:

"You may skin me for a painter Master Albert ef these here same cussed red-skins haint surcumvented us most powerful—they hev, by ——! Now, we've had all this here tramp for nothin', I'll bet Killnigger again a raccoon skin; an' we've got to tramp it all back agin, sure."

Albert fairly uttered a groan of dismay.

"By what do you judge?" he asked sadly.

"Why, ef they'd went along here in this soft bottom some of thar footprints 'ud be stickin' thar yet; but thar ain't, as it is, not even a shadder o' one."

"Ah me!" sighed the other, dejectedly. "I am beginning to get discouraged."

"Taint no use, though, for nothin' never comes o' givin' up the chase. Ef it warn't for the gal, I'd look upon all this here as a heap o' fun; but for her sake, I hate to lose time, for fear they'll git her into hands more difficult to git her out on. However, we've got to go back, an' thar's no use o' standin' to think about it. So come, let's trudge!"

It was with a sinking heart, and feelings too painful to be described, that Albert turned to retrace his steps. The day was wasting away, and already the sun was half-way to the meridian, and they had in reality not got beyond the encampment of the Indians, thus giving the latter several hours the start. Besides, there was no certainty of finding the trail for even hours to come, if they found it at all, and by that time the savages might be secure against so small a foe. And then—horrible thought!—what might be the fate of the being he loved, and the only friend, as it were, now left him upon the wide earth! All these thoughts rushed upon Albert and he felt a sickening, disheartening, enervating sensation come over him. Weak from excitement and loss of rest, it was with the utmost difficulty he could keep his feet, and drag himself back to the camp. Nor when he reached there, was there anything to revive his spirits—for not a sign of the broken trail had as yet been discovered. It was plain to be seen where it entered the water; but where it had come out was a secret which baffled even the forest wisdom and sagacity of Lewis Wetzel to divine.

"I own it gits me," said the other, at length. "Yes, I own it gits me. I'm clean used up, sarcumvented, an' no mistake. I hope I may marry a Huron squaw, ef I ain't jest as puzzled a white gintleman now as any you could pick up in the old settlements of Kaintucky—I am by ——! Reckon we'll hev to go down stream agin, Master Albert, an' trust to luck. I don't see no other way; I don't, on the honor o' a white gintleman."

"Alas! Then there is no hope!" groaned the desponding Albert.

"Well, I can't say that, exactly. Though it does look sort o' dubious, I hev to acknowledge. But afore we start I'll examine this here trail agin, to be sure thar's no mistake."

Saying this, Wetzel got down on his hands and knees at the spot where the mocassin prints entered the water; and after looking long and steadily he arose, and merely bidding his companion await his return, he disappeared into the thicket. Albert, more dead than alive, threw himself down upon the earth, in that peculiar state of mental stupefaction which makes one perfectly reckless of consequences, and, so he escaped his present misery, to care not what followed. In this mood and position he had remained some ten or fifteen minutes, when suddenly his ears were saluted with a whoop that made him bound to his feet and clutch his rifle with a nervous grasp. The next moment he heard the low, peculiar laugh of Wetzel, and soon after the old hunter came reeling through the bushes, holding his sides, and seeming ready to drop to the ground from excess of mirth.

"In the name of heaven, what is the matter, my friend?" cried Albert, running to him in alarm, and fancying this singular and untimely levity must proceed from a sudden touch of insanity. "Speak to me, my friend—speak—or I shall go distracted myself!"

But the earnest manner of Albert only seemed to increase the paroxysm, and instead of making him any direct answer, Wetzel laid himself down upon the ground, and rolled over and over, still laughing in that low, peculiar strain. Albert was frightened.

While he stood looking on, considering whether it were best to roll his friend into the creek, and give him a good wetting, or take some other means to restore him to his senses, the latter so far recovered as to speak.

"The fools!—the asses!" he said; "we the fools an' they the asses—ha, ha, ha!" and again he rolled over in a mirthful convulsion.

"Mad!" cried Albert. "Oh, my God! He is mad."

"Not a bit on't," rejoined the old hunter, gradually getting calmer—"not a bit on't, Master Albert. Do I look like mad, you simpleton, when I'm so tickled I can't stand up? Can a fellow laugh like I've done when he's mad? Not a bit on't."

"What, in heaven's name, is the matter with you, then?"

"Tickled, that's all—tickled a'most to death. O, my sides! You see we've been fooled, an' I've jest diskivered how. Now, would you b'leve it, only two of them cusses acterly come down to the creek here with the gal; and then instead of going into the water, they only made b'lieve; an' taking the gal up in their arms they made the tracks back'ard, cl'ar up to the camp; an' then all did the same cl'ar up to the 'bankment, whar they jumped one side an' started a new trail."

"You found the trail, then?" inquired Albert joyfully.

"In course I has—in course; an' I found, too, whar one o' the cusses, in makin' a long step back'ard, stepped on a greasy place and slipped down in the mud; an' I jest got a idee how foolish he looked gittin' up, an' it sot me to laughin' as ef I'd never seen

nothin' afore to tickle me. But it's over now—the trail's found—an' I'm the white gintleman as can lick any six red niggers that ever drawed breath."

Having recovered the trail, our friends now set off in fine spirits, compared to what had been their feelings for the last few hours. Considerable delay had been occasioned; but as if to compensate for it the present trail was broad and open, and could be followed rapidly—the savages doubtless feeling satisfied that enough had been done to completely baffle their pursuers, should they have any. Our friends now gained upon the foe perceptibly—who, under a feeling of security, most probably, had slackened their pace materially, as could be discerned by closely noting the steps, and their distance apart, as had been done on the previous day.

Toward night it became certain to our hunters, by signs unmistakable, that the Indians could not be far in advance, and in consequence they displayed the utmost caution in all their movements. They had by this time reached a large tributary of Will's Creek, and the trail led along its banks, through a dense, dark forest, where nothing could be seen fifty yards in advance of the eye. It now became evident that the Indians would encamp in the vicinity, and fearing to follow too close upon them, it was agreed between our friends that they should remain where they were till night, and then keep along the bank of the creek till they saw the light of their camp fire, so sanguine were they that the party sought could not be far off. This plan they put in practice—resting themselves upon the ground till the sun had fairly set—by which time it was so dark under the matted foliage of the

trees that objects a dozen feet from the eye grew misty and indistinct, and ten minutes later could not be discerned at all.

The hunters now set forward again—Wetzel, as usual, taking the lead, but treading the earth so lightly as not to make the least sound. In this way he had advanced something like a mile, with Albert close behind, stepping in his very tracks, when all at once he stopped and taking the other by the arm whispered:

"Hist! We've got 'em. Don't make no noise, on your life. Yonder I can see the fire-light."

Albert looked through a little opening before him, and, at a distance of not more than a hundred yards, beheld the ruddy light of the fire upon the dark green leaves and boughs of the trees above it—the fire itself, and those around it, being concealed from his view by a little hillock that intervened.

Chapter V

THE CAMP OF THE ENEMY

"Now don't disgrace your larnin' lad!" said Wetzel, in a low, emphatic tone. "You've got to be guided by me in all things, or else we'll hev our jarney for nothin' onless it be to lose our own scalps."

"Well, what do you advise?" inquired Albert, with the eager impatience of a lover who is about to rescue from peril the being he above all others adores.

"Why, we must reconnitre the inemy carefully, an' then ef we find 'em all snug an' right we'll—"

"I see!" interrupted Albert, hastily, "we'll rush upon them, shoot down the first we come to, liberate the girl, and—"

"Git our brains blowed out for bein' —— fools!" interrupted Wetzel, in turn. "No Master Albert—sich may be a lover's notions o' fightin' Injins—but anybody that's fou't with 'em as much as I hev, knows a heap better. No, no, young man—ye don't understand it yit, it seems, an' that's the reason I want ye to do jest as I tell ye, an' nothin' else."

"Well, out with it; for I'm dying to see my own Forest Rose."

"Yes, and it's maybe you'll die afore ye see her, ef you don't make lower speeches. You forgit tha's a inemy nigh, with sharp ears, don't ye? No, when we've diskivered that all's right, we'll jest lay back

in the dark an' watch till mornin', an' then we'll fotch every red-skin thar."

"What! And leave poor Rose another night of agony?"

"Yes, for that we can't help, ef we go right to work; an' ef we don't, it'll be all the wosser for all on us. The fact o' the matter is jest this, an' nothin' else: Ef we attack the Injins now we can't kill more'n two on 'em at a single shot, an' the others will take to kiver, whar they'll be ready to do us jest sich another turn when we git within the light of the fire, as we'll have to do to fotch the gal cl'ar of 'em. We can't foller Injins in the dark, in course—case why—we're not owls, or wolves, an' can't see. Well, to say the least on't, they'll git away from us, an' ayther set off to git company or else they'll prowl around for a shot. This, ye see, won't do, no how—for we want every scalp the red niggers hev got—an' Kill-nigger here is fa'rly itchin' to go off half-cocked. Ef we wait till daylight I've got a plan that'll fotch 'em all, an' no mistake. D'ye understand now?"

"Of course I must be guided by you, and your observations are plausible; though it is hard to think of remaining all night in sight of the enemy, and poor Rose, without striking a single blow, either for revenge or in her defense."

"It is hard, I'll allow—it's powerful hard for me an' you both—but it's the only way, you may depind on't, to sarcumvent the —— redskins. An' now that all's settled, we'll go forward and reconnitre."

Wetzel now took the lead, as usual, cautioning his young friend, who came close behind, not to forget himself, when he came in sight of the girl, and betray

his presence to a watchful enemy, as everything now depended on prudence.

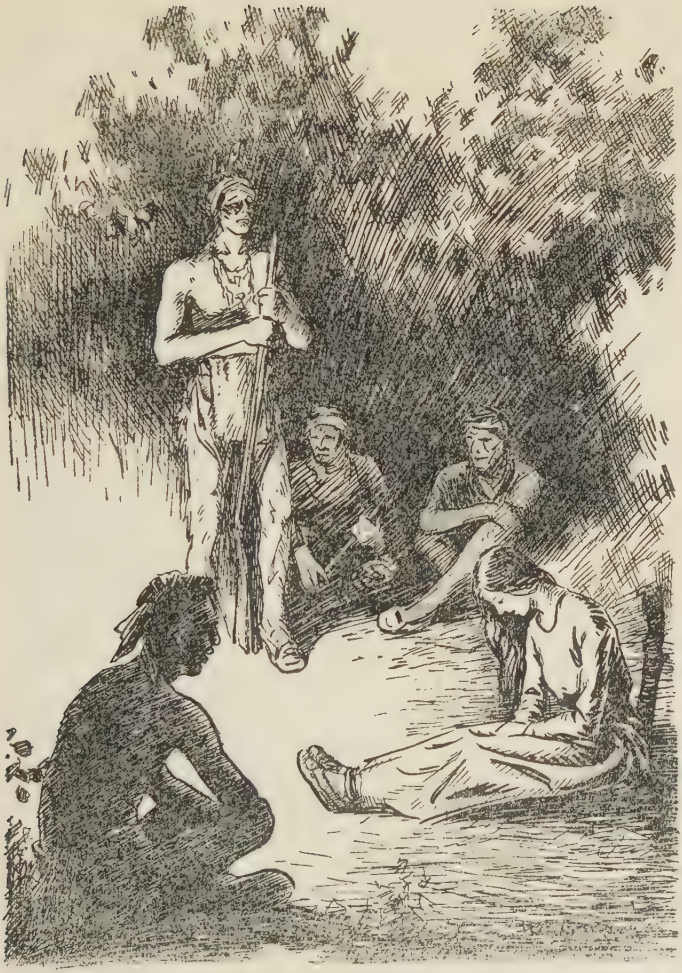
We shall not stop to analyze the feelings of our hero as he moved with the stealthy pace of a crouching panther, about to spring on his prey, toward her in whom his very existence seemed bound up. Suffice it to say, that his heart beat almost audibly, and that several times he was forced to stop to still his nerves, lest his trembling steps should give out a sound that might betray him to everlistening ears. Although the distance from where the light was first discovered to the brow of the little hillock, where could be had a full view of the camp, was considerably less than a hundred yards, yet so slowly and cautiously did our hunters move (carefully parting each bush, and, when past, easing it back to its place, so as not to cause the least sound) that some ten or fifteen minutes were consumed before they reached the desired position. But this was at last effected, and without alarming the enemy. Creeping to the brow of the knoll, which, fortunately for their purpose, was thickly covered with shrubbery and heavy foliage, they laid themselves flat upon the ground, with their heads only on a level with the summit, and, carefully parting the tangled bushes, peered into the camp of the enemy.

Notwithstanding all the reiterated charges of Wetzel to Albert with regard to caution, no sooner did the latter get a full view of what was before him than a cry, half of rage and half of joy, rose to his lips, and was only suppressed by a master effort; yet not without a sound something like a smothered groan, which fortunately, a light air stirring the

leaves, and the preoccupation of the savages, together with a feeling of security, prevented the latter from hearing. Instantly Albert felt the severe pressure of Wetzel's grasp upon his arm, and a low emphatic "Hist!" sounded in his ear, putting him doubly on his guard for the future.

But the sight he beheld was well calculated to throw a more experienced hunter than himself, provided he was similarly circumstanced, off his guard. The scene we shall now proceed to describe.

A fire had been kindled under a large beech, whose dense foliage—united with that of trees of small growth, whose limbs and branches interlocked—formed a complete canopy, through which not even a star was visible. In front of the beech, and between it and the fire, a stake had been driven firmly into the earth, and to this stake little Rose Forester was bound, by a strip of deer skin being fastened to a ligature which passed around her ankles, thus depriving her of the use of her feet, while her hands were left at liberty. She was, in consequence, sitting upon the ground, with her back to the stake. Her features were pale and grief-worn, and altogether she had a very forlorn, hopeless look. She had cried till her eyes had become dry, and were now, in consequence, swollen, feverish, and red, and yet she was moaning still—uttering those low mournful, choking sounds and sobs, which proceeded from a seemingly incurable sorrow, when nature has become completely exhausted. Her glossy, raven hair, usually arranged with great taste and care, was now disheveled, and swept her pale face and neck in utter confusion, occasionally swaying back and forth as the night breeze blew



Her features were pale and grief-worn, and altogether she had a very forlorn, hopeless look.

heavier or lighter. Her dress, a check calico, which had been purchased of some traders, and presented to her by Albert, and which her own skill and fair fingers had made and fitted neatly to her figure, was now torn with brambles and otherwise materially disarranged, though by no means so as to expose her person improperly. On her feet, when setting out on this painful journey, she had worn light moccasin slippers; but these had long since given out, and her feet had been shockingly torn, and cut and were now swollen and bleeding causing her great physical pain. Altogether, she was a pitiable object, and when we take into consideration the horrible scene she had witnessed in the murder of her friends—her long, tedious march through a pathless wilderness—her present painful condition, and the seemingly hopeless and more terrible future that lay before her—some faint idea of her own feelings, and those of her lover (who now beheld her, but whom she imagined far away, if, indeed, he were living at all) may be formed by the generous-minded reader.

The captors of Rose were four in number, three of whom were Indians, and the fourth a white renegade, as had been conjectured by Wetzel. They were seated in a half circle near the fire, so as to face their prisoner, and consequently with their backs toward our friends, who thus, at the most could only get a side view of their faces.

They were a hideous looking party, the Indians themselves being nearly naked, and what little covering they had consisted of untanned skins, with their hair side out, belted around the waist and reaching a little below the hip, with leggings of the

same below the knees, and coarse moccasins on their feet, all the rest of their persons, their brawny chests and arms, being as nude as nature made them, save the thick coats of coarse black paint, which had been daubed on in streaks to suit Indian fancy, while preparing for the bloody war-path. They wore no ornaments whatever, except a few gaudy feathers attached to their long, dirty, greasy-looking scalp-locks. The renegade was costumed, if we may use the word in this connection, like his companions, except that his person was more generally covered, and that he had totally avoided the use of paint—doubtless taking it for granted that his own villainous features would have terror enough for his foes without the assistance of art. He was a low, square-built man, some thirty years of age, with red hair, and a countenance every way repulsive. From his general appearance, Albert judged him to be the same person Rose had described as stopping at the cabin and procuring a drink of water, and whose trail he had followed on the day when he so opportunely fell in with Lewis Wetzel. Unlike the Indians, the renegade had a cap of the skin of some wild beast, but this was now lying on the ground beside him. Each wore a belt around his waist, in which were stuck the usual accompaniments of Indian warfare, the tomahawk and scalping knife. Their rifles were either lying across their laps or on the ground beside them; but otherwise they were totally unguarded, and seemed unsuspicious of danger. And, withal, they were in rather an agreeable mood, for they talked and laughed in low tones as they tore

off pieces of jerk and devoured them with the greediness occasioned by long fasting.

Wetzel who was familiar with all the tribes of the Northwest Territory at once recognized them by their war-paint and dialect to be a scouting party of Wyandotts detached from a larger body which he feared might now be in the vicinity. He understood a smattering of the Huron language, and from now and then an expression he could overhear, his fears were in great measure confirmed, though he took care not to make it known to his companion who was already sufficiently excited by what he beheld.

After chatting, laughing, and eating for some time in their own peculiar way, one of the warriors arose, and detaching a gourd from his girdle, proceeded to the creek to fill it, and leaving his rifle behind. The idea now flashed across the mind of the old hunter that by stealing after the Indian, giving him a deadly blow, and then waiting where he fell till another should come to look for him, he might in this way make himself master of the party. But a little reflection convinced him that it would be safest to wait till morning, as a single mistake would spoil his plan, and there was no certain dependence to be placed on Albert, who was not only young, inexperienced, but moreover, a lover, and under circumstances calculated to destroy his coolness and make him precipitate and rash. Therefore, the Indian was allowed to fill his gourd unmolested, but as, on his return, he passed within ten feet of where our friends were concealed, and in plain, open view, it required no small effort, on the part of Albert, to avoid giving

him the contents of his rifle, over the barrel of which his fingers worked convulsively.

But he restrained his eager desire, only to find himself shortly after put to a much severer test, for on the return of the savage to his party, with the gourd, a tall, athletic Indian arose, and after taking a drink, stepped around to Rose and reached it to her. By this change in his position his face was brought fronting our friends, with the fire between him and them, and shining full upon his person; and now it was, to the horror of Albert, he beheld two scalps hanging at his girdle, which, by the hair, he recognized as those of his own late dear mother and sister. He groaned, for he could not help it, but a pressure on the arm from Wetzel warned him that he must not indulge in even this mode of giving vent to his griefs, while so near the authors of all his sorrow. But he was destined to be tried still further.

Rose took the gourd from the Indian, and drank freely, and then handed it back to him, whereupon he gave a satisfied grunt of pleasure. Then he offered her some jerk, but she waived it away with an expression of loathing.

"Ugh!" grunted the savage, who could speak a very little English. "Must eat! Not eat—him die."

"Godsend I may die!" exclaimed Rose, "rather than live in such company. Why did you not murder me along with my friends?"

"Injin no want to kill Forest Rose," replied the savage, either from a previous knowledge of her soubriquet, or a remarkable coincidence. "No! Him make fine squaw for warrior—for some day chief.

Hoe corn, bring water, cook meat, take care pappoose. Eat him—good!" And he again offered her the meat.

"I will not touch it," said Rose firmly.

"Then me kill—take scalp!" cried the other, suddenly raising the hatchet as if about to strike.

"Hold now, none o' that!" cried the renegade, suddenly springing up and advancing to the other, at the same time that Albert, laboring under the most intense excitement, was about bringing his rifle to bear upon the savage, with the intention of firing, let what would be the consequences. "None of that, I say!—she's my property, by right of discovery—and, by ——! I'm going to keep her!"

"Him no eat—me scare—no kill," replied the Indian, and then he said something in Huron which our friends did not understand, and walked back to his place at the fire.

As a precaution, after witnessing the scene just described, Lewis and Albert brought their rifles to bear upon the savages, so that any demonstration of violence toward little Rose might meet with a summary punishment. And when Albert got a full view of the renegade, as he took the Indian's place by the side of Rose, and beheld two more scalps at his girdle, which he doubted not were those of his father and brother, it required all the self-possession he was master of to prevent him from pulling the trigger and sending him to his last account.

"Why in h--l don't you eat something?" he demanded of Rose, in a coarse bullying tone. "D'ye want to starve yourself to death?"

"I have no desire for food," replied the other

faintly; "and as for death, I would rather die than live."

"But you hain't touched scarcely a morsel for more'n twenty-four hours, and that's the reason you're so weak, and lag behind so. It won't do. I tell ye you must eat something or—"

Here the renegade put his mouth to the ear of the girl, and concluded the sentence in a tone too low to be heard by any but herself. But the communication, whatever it was, was evidently a startling one, for little Rose uttered an exclamation of horror and the words:

"Oh! That would be worse than death a hundred times! Bring me the food. I will eat it, if it kills me."

"Now you talk sensible," was the renegade's reply, and he placed the meat in her lap, and moving away, joined his companions, and from the communication he made to them, and the laugh which followed, it was evident that the captors of Rose were making themselves merry at her expense.

Some half an hour more elapsed, during which the Indians sat around the fire, talking and smoking, when the leader of the party signified it was time to camp down. All immediately arose, and while one went for more fuel, another stirred the fire, a third examined the priming of the rifles, and the fourth, the renegade, proceeded to fasten Rose beyond the possibility of escape. For this purpose he made her place her hands behind her, and then, with a stout thong of deer-skin, he tied her delicate wrists together so that she could make no use of her hands whatever. To this thong he then tied another strip of deer-skin,

which he made fast to the stake, thus literally binding her hand and foot, as though she were some bold, intrepid warrior, instead of a weak, defenseless girl.

Having at last arranged everything to their satisfaction, the savages lay down upon the earth, one on either side of Rose (for in the category of savages we must place the renegade, though not an Indian), and the other two a little further off, and on opposite sides of the fire. Thus disposed, some half an hour more elapsed, by which time all gave evidence of being asleep, or at least in that peculiar drowsy state, or slumber, whereby the Indian gains rest when on the war-path. All this time our friends had been watching them intently, but making a signal to Wetzel that he now had something to communicate, Albert carefully withdrew on his side of the hillock, and the old hunter as carefully followed.

When a sufficient distance from the camp had been gained, to admit of his speaking without being overheard by the enemy, the former said, in a low tone:

"Wetzel, my friend, be the consequences what they may, poor little Rose must be liberated before morning. I cannot endure the thought of her passing the night in such a horrible manner. Great heaven! Only think what she must have suffered, and is suffering now!"

"I don't like it any better'n you do," replied the other, gravely, "but it'll never do to try to git her away with all them thar cusses piled up around her. You may depind on the honor of a white gintleman. Ef we cou'd creep in upon 'em, an' kill 'em all, it 'ud be all right, but it can't be did. I've tried Injins afore, an' I knows exactly how they sleep, with one

eye or t'other al'ays open, the red varmints! No, Master Albert, we'll hev to wait, sure—thar's no other way in reason, and everything else is agin natur', cl'ar."

"I tell you, Wetzel, it must be done!" rejoined Albert, emphatically. "It will be a risk, I know, but present circumstances demand it. I had counted on your assistance, but if you refuse to aid me, I will venture alone. Poor Rose must and shall be liberated, if it costs my life."

"Thar, that's it—if it costs your life," returned the other caustically. "Them's the words exactly—ef it costs your life, an' 't will cost your life or hern, or I don't know nothin' about red niggers."

"But good heavens, Wetzel," urged Albert desperately, "did you not notice how pale and emaciated she looked; you saw how she was grieving, and you heard the words of the renegade that she had not tasted food. Oh! If I could only let her know I am here! Would to God I could take her place! Come, my friend, think seriously. There is surely some way by which we may alleviate her suffering. It is beyond reason to remain thus near while she suffers such agony. I will not—I can not do it."

"But you must do as I said, Albert. I don't know no way I can make Injins behave like white gintlemen. Boy, you're ayther mad or a fool, an' thar ain't much difference atwixt 'em, as I look at it. S'posen you git killed, or the gal gits killed, or both on you gits killed, will you be any better off than you is now? Ef you gits killed, who'll be left to take car' o' the gal? Ef she gits killed, who'll you hev to take car' on and make ye happy? No, Master Albert,

you're excited, an' don't know when you're well off. You've got no more Injin judgment in ye now nor a greenhorn jest from the settlements. But howsomever, ef you've made up your mind, I ain't a goin' to stop you, so go ahead, but if ye gits into difficulty, don't blame me."

"I see! I see!" said Albert sadly. "It cannot be done. As you say, Wetzel, I am excited and so distracted I hardly know what I am about. Alas! Poor Rose! Poor Rose! If I could only let her know I am here it would be something gained, for then she would have hope to sustain her through this night of suffering. As it is, I fear she may faint and die. You see no way of making my presence known without endangering our plan?"

"It's risky business," replied the other. "A powerful risky business, but ef you're set upon it I'll do what I can for you. The gal I don't believe's asleep—though she pretends to be—and it's possible you mought make a sound that'ud be comprehended by her, without wakin' the cussed varmints that's about her—though's I said afore it's a powerful risky business, an' a miss mought ruin everything. D'ye know any familiar sound atwixt ye, that a sleepin' savage might mistake for a animal, an' she know the difference?"

"I have often sat with her, on a moonlight night beside a rivulet whose soft murmurs sounded sweetly to the ear and imitated the gentle whip-poor-will," replied the other, eagerly.

"That mought do—though the bird ain't so common here as 'tis in some places, but I've heard 'em, an' so ef you try anything, better try that."

It was now arranged between our two friends that both should creep back and examine the camp and if all were quiet that Albert should leave his rifle with Wetzel, and, making a stealthy circuit, should come up behind the beech, and guardedly sound the mellifluous notes of that sweet songster of the night, whose music consists in repeating its own melodious name, while the old hunter, with both rifles in his possession, should keep a close watch on the savages, and be ready to do his work of death in the event of any sudden alarm.

Chapter VI

THE SIGNAL AND SURPRISE

The camp was found all quiet, as our friends had left it. The swarthy savages were stretched upon the ground in the same position, as though they had not stirred hand or foot since settling themselves down to sleep. The fire was still burning brightly in the center, its ruddy blaze lighting up a small circle of the dense forest, and giving bold relief to one side of the swarthy figures on the ground, and burying the other in shadow. For a considerable distance around, the trunks of the trees were revealed, standing like rude columns in nature's temple to support the heavy canopy of dark green leaves above. Near the fire they stood minutely revealed, but as they retreated from the vision toward the outer circle they grew more and more dim till at last they were lost to the eye and blended with the surrounding darkness which formed a background to the picture. Altogether the scene was highly picturesque—with the trees, the foliage, and the dark waters of the creek, faintly seen on one side—the sleeping savages—the stake, and the poor prisoner girl lying bound—all heightened in effect by the ruddy light of a flickering fire—and would have made a desirable study for our own bold, indefatigable, and talented Indian artist, Stanley.

Rose was lying on her side, in a very uncomfortable

position, with her hands drawn behind her, and her head partly resting against the stake, the only pillow she had to support it from the damp earth. Her face was inclined from the fire, and her features were in shadow, so that it was impossible for our friends to discover from their point of observation, whether she was asleep or awake; they judged the latter, though, if asleep, they knew it must be a light and troubled one, for occasionally she moaned piteously, and uttered a long-drawn, sobbing sigh, like a child that has cried itself to forgetfulness. Each moan and sigh went to the heart of Albert like a dagger, and made Wetzel fear for the result of the young man's experiment, lest, under the excitement of a recognition, all danger for the moment should be forgotten, and an unguarded act either put them in the power of the savages, or warn the latter of the presence of an enemy and thus destroy his own plan of killing all, and it might, also, result in something serious and fatal to those whose interests he had so generously taken to heart.

"Well, this comes o' having a lover on the trail," he said mentally. "They ain't fit for nothin' when thar partikelar gal is in danger but to blunder in an' spile all a cool headed feller has fixed to help 'em. Now I've give advice, an' what's the upshot on't? This here youth, won't take it, an' he'll hev his own way. Well ef he gits killed tain't my fault, though I'd hate to lose him most powerful, for thar's a heap o' fellers mought be spared much better nor Maywood."

Wetzel now cautioned his friend, partly by signs and partly in whispers, to use the utmost care, and

in no case to let his feelings get the better of a cool judgment. The other promised compliance, and then, with a beating heart, slowly and silently withdrew. The old hunter now brought both rifles into such a position that he could discharge them in quick succession, with fatal aim, should there chance to be an alarm, and then, with compressed lips, and a secret dread of consequences, he waited in silence, with the senses of seeing and hearing both actively employed.

Minute after minute of almost breathless suspense went by, yet no sound but the solemn roar of the deep forest, the rustling of leaves to a gentle night breeze, the occasional snapping of a spark, or crackling of the flame, and now and then a sigh or a moan from the poor prisoner, disturbed the silence, and nothing was seen to move, save now and then a leg or an arm of some savage who stirred in his sleep.

At last the suspense became almost painful, and the old hunter was forced to admit, much against his will, that it had an effect upon his nerves, such as he had seldom experienced in all the trying scenes through which he had passed, and their number was legion.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes elapsed, and yet no sound of the whip-poor-will was heard, and even the old hunter, a pattern of prudence, began to think that his caution to Albert not to be rash was either a needless one or that the other was following his injunctions to the very letter, and consequently beyond the spirit of their meaning. At length Wetzel began to grow impatient and then uneasy at this long silence. He had half determined to abandon his position, and

go in quest of his friend, when the soft, musical notes of the whip-poor-will sounded clear and distinct through the arches of the great forest, and so perfect was the imitation that even the old hunter was more than half inclined to believe it was produced by the real bird itself, and not by his friend at all.

At the first notes one of the Indians, lying next to the prisoner, raised his head and listened but even he was deceived, and turning over, he again composed himself to sleep.

For some minutes the sound had no visible effect upon Rose, although it was evident she heard it, for when the Indian moved she changed her position also, and dropped her head from against the stake to the ground. The song of the bird ceased, and for some moments all was silent; then it commenced again in a lower, softer, and more plaintive strain, and gradually the notes quavered.

On hearing this Rose raised her head quickly, and looked hurriedly about her, and then turned her eyes toward a large beech tree. Wetzel now heard a low "Hist!" and saw the girl drop to the ground and tremble as if she had seen some terrible sight.

At this the renegade started up on his hands, and, after looking drowsily around him, fixed his gaze upon his prisoner, and in a rough tone demanded:

"What in the h—l is the matter with you?"

Rose made no reply, and after gazing at her for a moment or two his head began to nod, and he dropped down with an oath, in which he invoked eternal torments on all troublesome prisoners, and before the words were fairly out of his mouth he was fast asleep. Not so the rest of the party. The voice of the rene-

gade had awakened the Indians, and raising themselves up to a sitting posture, they stared stupidly around, and then while two lay down again, the third got up and put more fuel on the fire, stretched, yawned, and at last imitated his more drowsy companions by again taking a horizontal position before the fire.

Some ten minutes of silence elapsed, during which the Indians appeared to have fully relapsed into the arms of Morpheus, when again sounded the melodious notes of the whip-poor-will. This time little Rose raised her head slowly and carefully and looked cautiously toward the trunk of the giant beech. The song ceased, and a soft whisper, which might almost have been mistaken for the night breeze playing among the leaves, bore to her ear the enchanting words:

"Thy Albert is near, with other aid. Pretend to sleep, and hope on till morning when thou shalt be at liberty once more with him that loves thee!"

The voice ceased, and bowing her head in token that she understood the words, Rose again lay down, and the same deep stillness again reigned throughout the solitude. Albert carefully withdrew, and the whip-poor-will was heard no more that night. In five minutes the young hunter had joined his companion.

"You've done well," whispered Wetzel, "an' I'll give ye credit for't—though I'll hev to own I was once't or twice't most-powerful skeery like on your account an' the gal's. We've got nothin' to do now but wait, an' watch, an' be ready to give these here ripscallions their breakfast on lead."

Albert, after his communication to Rose, felt more

reconciled to his condition—though the night, as might be expected, proved long and tedious—and he lay and watched the camp of the enemy and the stars overhead, with what feelings we must leave to the reader's imagination. He felt faint and weary, for neither he nor his companion had eaten anything since the morning before, with the exceptions of the little the other had found and devoured, as the reader will remember, in the last night's encampment of their hideous foes. Besides, Albert had not slept since setting out on the trail of the stranger, and he had passed over more than fifty miles of wilderness and gone through a scene of horror that, of itself, was enough to have laid him on a bed of sickness, had his physical powers not been supported by extraordinary mental excitement. And that same excitement served him still, though he felt that his body was fast giving way to excessive fatigue. More than once, toward morning, he found his eyes involuntarily closing, and nature fast yielding to a dull, heavy drowsiness, which required unusual effort to throw off. Still he managed not to sleep, though his companion did, and for several hours. Once he fancied that he had forgot himself, though only for a moment, and this so alarmed him that he closed his eyes no more that night.

The fire of the camp gradually burned down, so that distant objects faded to indistinctness, and the huge figures of the sleepers became wrapped in a somber light, that only half revealed them, and left fancy free to conjure them into so many demons of the other world. Once one of the party, probably feeling chilled by the night air, which was very cool,

arose and stirred the fading embers, but not succeeding in rekindling the fire, he sat down beside it, with his hands crossed over his knees. This at first gave Albert considerable uneasiness. In case the savage waited thus till morning he might possibly discover his position before the proper time to fire upon the enemy. But his apprehension proved groundless, for, after sitting thus a few minutes, the Indian began to nod, and soon after rolled over upon the earth in a heavier slumber than he had probably experienced through the night.

At last the stars began to pale, a slight rosy flush ascended the Eastern heavens far toward the zenith, and a leaden hue had taken the place of the impenetrable blackness of the forest. Albert now gently awoke his companion, and both silently reprimed their rifles and looked carefully to the flint that there might be no mistake at the perilous moment, which was fast approaching. They then placed their rifles in rest, and drew back as far as was possible, without losing sight of their foe. Once settled, there was no danger of their being seen, for they lay flat upon the rising hillock, face downward, with their heads sufficiently raised to see over its brow between the thick leaves and brushwood which surrounded them and formed their ambuscade.

It was now agreed between them that the renegade and the Indian with the scalps at his girdle should be the first victims, as it was evident that these were the most powerful and the leaders of the party, if indeed, it could be said to have any leader, or leaders, where all were so much on an equality. This was resolved on as a matter of policy, as well as to make

sure that, if any escaped, the scalps should not go with them as trophies of success, and also to be certain that revenge should fall upon the proper ones, in the event that all were not killed. Albert settled upon the renegade for his target and Wetzel the Indian—each being well satisfied with the arrangement—the former, because the renegade had insulted Rose, and the latter, because his mark was an Indian, toward whom, as we have shown, he had a mortal hatred.

Once it had begun to grow light the day came on fast, and every moment objects grew more and more distinct, till at last avenues of no inconsiderable length could be traced in the deep forest, with their columns of trees supporting the green foliage-dome of nature.

Rose, who since the communication made to her by Albert had scarcely stirred, now slightly raised her face and peered timidly around, and then dropped her head and shuddered. Poor girl! It was now a matter of doubt with her whether she had heard the voice of him she loved in reality, or only in a delusive dream, and she feared the worst. One of the savages now partially aroused himself and perceiving it was light, sprung up suddenly and with a guttural ejaculation awakened his companions, who immediately started to their feet also, and from some exclamations they made it was evident they had overslept the appointed hour for rising.

The important moment was now at hand, and Albert felt a strange sensation as he glanced along the barrel of his deadly rifle. He was about to pull the trigger on a human being—was about to shed the blood of a fellow-creature for the first time, and send

him loaded with crime into the presence of his Maker. True, it was only doing an act of justice, and that in self-defense; but still he was coolly calculating on it, and the idea seemed horrible.

"If it were only in mortal combat," he reasoned with himself, "and my passions were fully roused, and my blood hot, it would not seem so much like murder, and would not touch my conscience. Still, the villain deserves to die, and the blood of my kindred calls on me to avenge them."

With this reflection his lips compressed, and a stern sense of duty came over him. He thought of Rose, and her wrongs, and all pity left his heart, and conscience no longer chided him. As if to make matters still more aggravating, the renegade now approached Rose and said gruffly:

"Come, wench, stir yourself! For you've got a long day's tramp before ye, and by ——! I'll have no lagging by the way!"

Poor Rose looked up, and her pale face had in it such a mournful appeal to mercy, that it must have touched the heart of any who could feel the sense of pity. But the renegade appeared totally unmoved, and as he cut the cord that bound her wrists and ankles he drew back his foot as if to bestow upon her a kick.

But if such was his intention, the foot never accomplished his design for at the moment the tall Indian stepped forward, so as to face our friends, the click of two rifles sounded in the ambuscade. The moment of fearful retribution and vengeance was at hand, and the measure of their iniquity was full to the brim.

Only one sharp report was heard, as the rifles simultaneously belched forth fire and smoke, and their leaden messengers were already sped on their mission of death. Two mortal groans succeeded, and two heavy bodies fell to the earth writhing in pain.

At the same instant the unharmed savages uttered yells of surprise and terror, and grasping their rifles bounded away to cover; while Wetzel leaped from the thicket, and shouting to his companion to make sure of his "game" rushed forward and buried his tomahawk in the brain of the prostrate savage, whose limbs gave one short quiver, and then straightened in the last throe of death.

Chapter VII

THE MEETING OF THE LOVERS

"It's the private and partikelar opine of a white gintleman that you'll never trouble nobody agin," said Wetzel, as he bent over the bloody corpse of his victim, and swinging his huge knife around the top of the head, he tore off the reeking scalp, which, after shaking in the face of the dead, with a demoniac grin, he attached to his girdle. "Quick!" he added, turning to Albert, "make a sure thing of that white nigger, take the gal, and break for kiver afore ye git a bullet lodged in your body," and uttering a loud whoop of defiance he sprang behind the beech opposite to the direction taken by the alarmed savages, and commenced loading his rifle with great rapidity.

All this was the work of a moment, as it were, and occupied less time than we have in describing it. But Albert thought not of his prostrate victim, nor of the concealed enemy. Lover-like, he thought only of Rose, and rushing to her, both uttered cries of joy, and the next moment, weak from loss of food and rest, and overjoyed at her happy deliverance, she staggered forward, threw her delicate arms around his neck, and fainted in his embrace. Albert stood gazing upon her, overpowered with emotions too deep for utterance, and seeming totally at a loss what to do. But the voice of Wetzel soon aroused him to a sense of danger.

"D'ye want to be killed in arnest?" cried the old hunter again, "that you stand thar like a fixed target for Injin bullets? Why don't ye take the gal to the tree, an' show you've got some sense in ye yit?"

Thus warned the second time Albert no longer delayed in placing himself and her he loved in safety. Casting a hurried glance around, and perceiving the dead and scalpless Indian, and the apparently lifeless renegade, weltering in his blood near his feet, he seemed for the first time since the onset to comprehend what had taken place, and throwing an arm about the waist of Rose he raised her light form and darted behind the beech, where the old hunter—with a dexterity in loading equaled only by a few of the border men, excelled by none—was already priming his long weapon of death.

"Now you stay right here, and keep this tree atwixt ye and the cussed red-skins, and I'll show ye a heap o' fun," said the intrepid woodsman. As he spoke he sprang from behind his cover, and running toward a thicket near the creek, in which he supposed the enemy was concealed, he gave two or three loud whoops, and discharged his rifle at random; then whooping louder than ever, he turned and fled, taking a direction opposite to that where our friends were concealed. This ruse had the desired effect. The Indians, who had seen his whole movements, and now believing him an easy prey—since his rifle, to their certain knowledge, was not loaded—at once sprung from their covert, with yells of vengeance, and gave chase.

Now it was that Wetzel displayed in full perfection that wonderful skill that had already made him so

famous on the borders, both among the whites and Indians. Darting away, with an agility that put the Indians to all their fleetness to keep him in sight, but without giving the latter time to fire, he poured the powder into his rifle, rammed down the ball, primed it, and then dodged behind a tree, where he waited till his foremost pursuer was in full view, when he threw his head round his weapon with the quickness of thought, and fired. The savage gave a loud yell of rage and pain, and bounded from the earth, and fell down a corpse, pierced through the heart. The other, who was only a few steps behind, uttered a cry of dismay, and paused to gaze at his bloody companion. But the taunting laugh of the old hunter, who was already again darting away, aroused his fierce passions, and with a demoniacal yell of vengence, he once more gave chase, this time feeling sure of his intended victim. The distance was now so much lessened between them that Wetzel knew, if he ran in a straight line, the savage would have a fair opportunity to hit him in the back. Accordingly he took a zigzag course, whooping, hallooing, jumping and dodging from tree to tree. In this way, he completely foiled the attempts of his pursuer to get aim, and in a few minutes his rifle was again loaded. Once more springing behind a tree, he waited for the savage to come up. The latter, thinking he now had him at advantage, sprang forward with a yell of triumph, his own weapon leveled, ready to discharge the instant he should get a glimpse at the other's person. The same moment the sharp crack of a rifle awoke the sleeping echoes of the deep forest, and the yell of triumph was changed to a yell of pain as the Indian

recoiled and rolled over upon the earth, discharging his own piece in the air. The renowned backwoodsman now deliberately stepped from behind his tree, and after taking a quiet but hearty laugh, he said in his own peculiar way:

"I know'd thar'd be a powerful heap o' fun, an' I told Albert so. Poor fellow," he said, giving the dead Indian a kick, and again indulging in a low, quiet laugh, "you mought hev bin a powerful smart chap amongst your own painted brethern, but you ain't o' no account to come agin a white gintleman as knows how to handle powder. You mought do to fight women and squaws, but you never oughter tried nothin' more dangerous. You never was a beauty, in my opine, an' I don't reckon that little red hole in your greasy face helps your looks a good deal, I don't. You wanted my scalp, did ye? Sorry I couldn't 'commodate ye, but the fact is, I want it myself for a while. I'll take yourn, howsomever, bein's you don't need it more, an' I've had a heap o' trouble in comin' arter it," and bending down as he spoke, the old hunter severed it from the head, and dashing off the blood, hung it to his belt along side of the other.

Then he added, as a parting salute:

"Well, good-bye, red-skin, for 'tain't likely we'll ever meet agin, ayther in this here world or t'other. I've heard folks talk about a Injin heaven, but ef thar's sich a place as a Injin hell, I'd pertikerly advise sich o' your friends, ef ye've got any, as want to find ye powerful sudden, to look thar first. Good-bye, I say, an' good luck to the animal as t'ars the greasy meat off o' your bones!—hope he won't get pizened, is the worst wish I've got agin him."

Saying this, the old woodsman sauntered leisurely away, and bent his steps toward the camp, stopping on the road to scalp his other victim and give him a little parting advice.

But to return to Albert and Rose.

Albert saw his companion set off, and the yelping savages after him, not without many misgivings as to what might be the result. He would like to have gone to his aid, but he could not leave her whose life was dearer to him than his own. All this time poor little Rose was unconscious, but as he still supported her in his arms, chaffed her hands and temples, and called her by many an endearing epithet, she soon began to revive. At first she looked around a little bewildered, but it was not long before she comprehended all. She had been liberated from the savages, and by him she loved. He was now with her and his soft, blue eyes were looking mournfully and tenderly into hers, and the—to her—enchanting words, "My own dear Forest Rose!" were sweetly trembling on his half-parted lips.

"Albert, my own dear, dear Albert!" she murmured, and burying her face upon his manly breast, she wept, but they were tears of joy.

"Ah! My poor little Rose, I have thee once again!" he returned, straining her to his heart, while the manly tears of grief and joy, for the dead and the living, the past and the present, united and made his vision dim. "Alas! Dear Rose!" he continued, in a choking voice of deep emotion, "God only knows what we have suffered, and He alone is able to sustain us through our terrible trials. Oh! My father, my mother, my brother, my sister—all—all are gone!"

"Oh! Do not, do not recall the horrid scene!" cried Rose hysterically, shuddering, and clinging closer to him. "When I think of it my brain seems on fire, and sometimes I have thought I were going mad. Perhaps I shall get calmer soon, and then I will tell you all, but do not speak of it now."

"I will not, Rose—I will not—for it is too much for either of us in our present excited state and weak condition. We both need food and rest, and you, above all things, my little Rose, for I saw last night that you refused to eat, till forced by that accursed renegade."

"And were you present then?" inquired the other.

"I was. Yon little hillock only divided me from the enemy."

"And it was really you then, that imitated the whip-poor-will, as you were wont in our happier days?"

"It was I, Rose. I could not bear the thought that you should pass another night in hopeless misery, and I could not relieve you with any safety. I should have attempted it, however, but for my brave companion, Lewis Wetzel."

"He, then, is with you? I thought I saw another, but of late I fear to trust my senses. Where is he now?"

"Gone in pursuit of the savages—or rather, to withdraw them from us, he has set off into the forest, and bid them defiance, and they have gone in pursuit of him. Pray God that he may not be killed or captured—for then it would be almost impossible for us to escape."

"Hark!" cried Rose. "There is a gun. Oh, God! If he should be killed!"

"No, thank heaven!" rejoined Albert, breathing more freely. "I hear his shout and laugh, and the Indian yell of rage and dismay. It was his rifle we heard, and there is one foe less to contend with."

"We will hope so," said Rose, shuddering.

"I will load my rifle, at all events, and be prepared for the worst," returned Albert, and he immediately set about this necessary precaution.

"When I first heard the whip-poor-will last night," pursued Rose, "it brought you so forcibly to my mind that I felt as if my heart would break, for I truly thought we should never see each other again. Little did I then dream it was you in reality. But when it stopped, and recommenced with that soft, plaintive trill, which I had so often heard you make by way of variation, the delusion was so perfect, that, without a second thought, I raised my head and looked around, half expecting to behold you standing near. Nor was I wholly disappointed, for methought two soft eyes were beaming upon me, and soon those sweet words of hope that I shall never forget, stole softly upon my ear, like angel's whispers. I heard no more, but what I did hear gave me strength to pass the night in comparative happiness, though somehow, afterward, I recalled it as a dream, but still it seemed an omen of good. Ah! I would our gallant and generous hunter were back safe from our fearful enemies! But how did you fall in with him, Albert?"

The other proceeded to detail the manner in which they had met, while he had paused upon the trail of the renegade.

"Ah!" sighed Rose at the mention of the latter, "your fearful presentiment and suspicion of that terrible man were horribly verified, for he is the same that called the day before and procured a drink of water. But what has become of him?"

"He has met his reward. His body is near, but his soul is where man knoweth not."

"He is dead then?" rejoined Rose. "Aye, now I remember, methinks he fell near me, did he not? I have a confused recollection of hearing the report of a rifle—of hearing shouts and yells, and seeing you standing near—or rushing toward me, I cannot tell which—for immediately after everything turned dark, and I thought I was falling to the ground. But what is that?" exclaimed Rose, in terror, as at the moment a heavy groan sounded in her ear.

Albert sprang from behind the tree, with his now loaded rifle in hand, and at once his eye fell upon a horrid spectacle. The renegade, partly raised upon his hands, his face all covered with blood, which was streaming down from a wound in his head, was staring savagely around, with his fierce, swollen, and blood-shot eyes, that gleamed like balls of fire. Though mortally wounded, he was not yet dead, as Albert had supposed. The ball had struck the cap of the skull where it shuts down upon the head, and both slivered and raised it, and had then glanced off without penetrating the brain. He had fallen to the earth, stunned, but had now so far recovered as to be able to raise himself to the position just described. Besides the blood on his face, his coarse, shaggy hair was clotted with gore, and his hands and garments were deeply dyed. On the ground the blood had pooled,

and in moving his head one side of his face had rubbed in it, and to it had adhered such loose dirt as chanced to be underneath. At first his stare was wild and savage, and it was directed rather toward his dead companion than his living foe, though the position was such that Albert could see the hideous features distinctly.

As Albert stood gazing upon the dying man, Rose silently joined him, and the moment her eyes rested on the ghastly object before her, she involuntarily uttered an exclamation of horror. Instantly the renegade turned his savage eyes upon the lovers, and a demoniac expression made more frightful his villainous countenance, and an exclamation of baffled rage and hate passed his bloody lips. Then perceiving that the looks directed toward him were rather those of pity than malice, he articulated: "Water, water," in a rattling, husky tone.

"Water you shall have," replied Albert, perceiving that the gourd used by the Indians was lying on the ground at a short distance. "It shall not be said that I refused a dying man his last request, though that man was the ruthless murderer of all my kindred."

The words, and the deep tone of grief in which they were uttered, seemed to touch the better feelings of even this hardened wretch, for instantly the expression of the countenance softened, and Albert fancied he could detect a look of regret and remorse, as the other turned aside his head and fell back upon the earth.

Bidding Rose remain where she was, Albert, after looking carefully to his rifle, went forward, picked up the gourd, and, going to the creek, filled it with

water. He then returned and offered it to the renegade. The latter partly raised himself on one hand, took it with the other, and drained it without stopping to catch breath, so powerful was his thirst. Then looking steadily into the face of the young man, with a gaze that the latter could perceive was fast growing glassy and dim in death, he faintly gasped: "Thank you, for—forgive me!" and rolling over upon the earth, with a groan, expired.

"It's all over now," said Albert solemnly, "and his spirit has gone to be judged for the deeds done in the body," and he moved away to rejoin his little Rose.

While conversing with her on the death of the renegade, a shout was heard, and looking up, both perceived Lewis Wetzel within a few paces, approaching at a leisurely gait. Rose at once sprang forward with an artless freedom and the familiarity of an old friend, and taking his hand in both of hers thanked him warmly, with tearful eyes, for his kindness in so gallantly and generously coming to her rescue.

"Well," said the other, not a little affected by her manner, though he strove to conceal it under an air of indifference, "I hain't did no more'n my duty. I'm powerful glad, though, to see you alive an' safe, for I's afeared, one time, that you'd got cl'ar on us for sartin. Howsomever, it's all right now, an' the cussed red-skins hev paid for their bloody doin's, though it can't fotch back them as is lost."

"Alas!" rejoined Rose, with a fresh burst of grief. "My father, mother, brother, and sister—for they were all those to me, though kindred ties were not between us—have all gone to their long home. It is

a terrible trial, and may God give me strength to support me through it."

"And are all our enemies dead?" asked Albert, joining the party.

"Ef you mean them as captur'd Rose," replied the intrepid woodsman, "thar scalps is here," and he pointed significantly to his belt. "That is, I mean to say, all but one, and him I see (nodding toward the renegade) has got his'n on his head. How's this, Albert?"

"It is the first human being that has ever fallen by my hand—scalp him, I cannot," was the reply.

"O, well, it won't be long, ef ye hev much to do o' the woods, afore ye git over them thar chicken-hearted notions, I can assure ye. Ef you don't want to scalp him, why I do, an' though he's got white blood in him, he's a savage by natur' an' oughter hev a place among his heathen friends." As he said this he strode forward to the object of these remarks, and in another moment the fourth bloody scalp was making its circuit through the air, preparatory to finding its place among those that had preceded it.

Albert and Rose both turned aside with a sickening shudder. They had not as yet become sufficiently used to the barbarous customs of border life to witness all its horrid deeds with stoical eyes.

"Now," said Wetzel, with the satisfied air of a man who has performed a very commendable act, "ef we can pick up anything here worth eating, we'll hev some breakfast, for somehow I feel as gaunt as a starved pig." He then turned over the body of the Indian, and running his hand into a sort of wallet that was fastened to his side, exclaimed, with an expression

of delight, as he withdrew a dark bunch of something, "Here it is—here it is—jerk enough for all on us. Come on, and let us hev a feast."

"I thank you," replied Albert with a feeling of loathing. "I have no desire to eat—above all things, such food as that."

"Nor I," said Rose.

"What! You won't eat?" said the old hunter, in astonishment. "Then how in natur' do ye expect to live? You don't set yourselves up for them thar beasts as is called camellions, and as I've heard folks tell, lives on air, do ye?"

"No," answered Albert, glancing at Rose, and for the first time since the death of his friends, allowed a faint smile to lighten the deep gloom of his countenance. "No, friend Wetzel, we make no pretensions to live on air—though food taken from the murderers of our friends is repugnant to our tastes. At least, such is the case with myself, and I presume it is even so with Rose."

"It is," replied the latter.

"Well," pursued the old hunter, "it don't make no difference to me whar it comes from, ef it's only fit for a white gintleman to eat, an' thar's enough on't to stop a big exkevation, as the settlement chaps say. Jest you sit down somewhere an' wait till I've put this here meat out o' sight, an' I'll go out an' fotch in a deer, and maybe that'll suit ye better—bein's how I've got some salt along to season it."

"I thank you!" replied Albert. "That would certainly be doing us a great kindness, and we will gladly await your return."

"Better crawl into the bushes then, up thar on the

knoll," rejoined the other, "for thar's no knowin' what skulkin' varmints might be about, when ye ain't suspectin' 'em."

"I will take your advice," said Albert. "But do you really apprehend any danger from a lurking foe?"

"O, thar's no tellin' in these here woods, when the red-skins git thar hatchets once dug up, whar to find 'em, or what'll be the consequences. Since they licked St. Cla'r so powerful they got to be a heap more troublesome nor they was afore, an' we must look out for the worst. Howsomever, it's my opine we've peppered all the scamps that is 'bout here; but still it don't make nothin' no dangerouser to be sort o' cautious-like."

Saying this, Wetzel picked up the gourd, and moving away to the creek, sat himself down upon the grassy bank and prepared to make his morning's repast, while Albert and Rose, agreeable to his directions, repaired to the knoll where the thick underbrush screened them from observation.

"Here," said the young hunter, in a low, tender tone, "is ground I must ever hold sacred."

"For what reason?" inquired the other, in some surprise.

"Because it was from here I first beheld, after her capture, one whose life is dearer to me than my own, and because from here I took that signal vengeance upon one of her foes and mine, which even the justice of high heaven would seem to demand. It was from here I saw you, my own Forest Rose, a helpless prisoner; it was here I aimed the deadly weapon to set you free, and it was from here I rushed, exultingly, to clasp you once more in a fond embrace and restore

to you that glorious liberty which God designed for all his creatures."

"Then to me it shall be ever sacred, also," replied Rose, in a tone of deep sadness and affection. "But, notwithstanding, I would I were far from here now, for somehow I like not this forest, and a continual dread hangs over me, lest we may not be able to get back to a settlement without meeting with more savages."

"God forbid that such should be the case! Though, like you, I admit I am not altogether without my fears. We must try, however, to guard against it. Wetzel is an old hunter, and will be likely to detect any signs of danger, and we will be guided solely by him. But for him, dear Rose, I fear I should never have found you; certain am I that, but for his assistance, I should have failed in liberating the only being now left me to love, and, perhaps, should have lost my own life also."

"Oh! That would have been horrible!" rejoined the other shuddering at the thought. "And, next to God, dear Albert, this noble hunter must have our undivided gratitude. Oh! Had you been killed," pursued little Rose, with that charming, naive simplicity and depth of feeling which never fails to touch the heart, and which now brought tears to the eyes of her lover, "what should have become of me, of your own little Forest Rose, as you were wont to call me. I should have had none to love then, and none to love me. For alas! All the rest of my friends are gone the long journey of death." And she buried her face in her hands to give unseen vent to her emotions.

"Poor Rose!" replied Albert, turning to her with tearful eyes and an anguished heart. "Poor Rose!" And throwing an arm around her slender waist he drew her fondly to him and imprinted a kiss of pure affection upon her now pale lips. "My own Forest Rose," he pursued, in a mournful tone of tenderness, "we must be all in all to each other now, and I pray to Him who reigns on high that He may give me strength and power to cherish and protect thee as thou deservest! All my kindred now lie in a bloody grave, and on thee, angel of my heart, shall henceforth be bestowed my undivided affection. If we can once reach a settlement in safety we will have the solemn rite performed which will bind us together forever, and then leave these frontiers—if not for life, at least until there shall come a time of peace, and the ruthless weapons of the savages shall be buried, to war no more."

There was a moment of silence after Albert had ceased speaking. Then the voice of Wetzel broke the stillness:

"Take car o' yourselves!" he said. "I'm goin' now, but hope to be back soon with somethin' you can eat. Don't stray away now whar I can't find ye. I'll try and kill a deer, for the meat'll be good, an' the skin on't 'll make Rose some nice moccasins."

"Don't be gone long," rejoined Albert, "whether you find the deer or not, for we are anxious to leave this place as soon as possible."

"Stay till I come," was the reply. "For it's agin reason and natur' to think o' travelin' any further without food. Again, I say, take car o' yourselves, an' don't leave your ambushment!"

"It seems as though there were something portentous in his caution," said Albert solemnly, and, raising his head above the bushes, he beheld with a gloomy foreboding he tried in vain to dispel, the tall, ungainly form of his late companion disappearing in the deep forest.

Chapter VIII

THE RECAPTURE

For some minutes after the departure of Wetzel neither of the lovers spoke, both apparently employed with thoughts of a very melancholy nature. Rose was the first to break the silence.

"Ah, me!" she sighed. "What must have been your feelings, dear Albert, when you came home and beheld the reality of your horrible presentiment!"

"God only knows what I felt and what agony I suffered!" returned the other, in a voice husky with emotions of grief. "Before the ruins of the cabin I beheld the gory corpses of my father and brother stretched upon the earth. The heart-sickening thought then came over me that all were dead—that you, Rose, you were dead—and I reeled like one intoxicated. Wetzel first gave me hope that some might be prisoners, and we ran down the hill to ascertain, but ere I reached the cabin my courage failed me. I feared to learn the truth. I sank down, beside my father and brother, and it was not till my companion assured me that all were not dead that I could gain strength to look upon the funeral pile of the departed—upon the remains of those so near and dear to me. Then I soon learned that you—you, my own Forest Rose—had been taken prisoner, and the thought that perhaps you might be rescued gave me strength to bear up under the terrible blow. We

dug a grave near the creek, and after consigning the bodies to their last earthly resting place Wetzel kindly buried them from my sight. I knelt upon the soft earth and silently prayed both for the dead and the living, and then arose and followed my companion down the creek on the Indian trail. But if my feelings were terrible, dear Rose, what must have been yours, who were an eye witness to the horrible butchery!"

"No one can tell my feelings," answered the other, "and even I have only an indistinct recollection of what they were myself. I believe I felt worse afterward than at the time, for it was all done so quickly, and was so horrible, that I became completely paralyzed with terror, and felt more like a person in a frightened dream than as one looking upon a reality."

"And how soon after I left was the attack made?"

"I judge it to have been an hour, though it might have been longer. Father had been to the field, and William also; but for some cause both returned to the house and from there went down to the barn. That was the last I ever saw of them till I beheld their bloody corpses lying where you found them. They were probably on their way back to the field, when they were fired upon by a concealed foe, and instantly killed. Mother and sister had put away the breakfast dishes, and were just in the act of removing the table. I had taken some coarse sewing, and seated myself near the door, with my face turned from it, when suddenly we heard the reports of rifles, followed by groans and yells that fairly made my hair stand with terror. At the same instant a couple

of dark figures sprang into the room, and one of them, seizing me by the throat, raised his tomahawk as if to strike. I shrieked and closed my eyes, as I then thought, never to open them again in life. Mother and sister shrieked also, and then I heard a stifling cry, succeeded by another shriek, then a groan or two, and the fall of some heavy body upon the floor. Then arose a series of horrible yells, and I found myself dragged from the building into the open air. All this, as I now recall it, was the work of a single moment, at least, I cannot realize that it lasted any longer. I now opened my eyes and beheld the renegade standing over me, with a tomahawk in his hand, from the blade of which fresh, warm blood was dripping. On seeing this, and the dead bodies of father and William before me, I believed that all were murdered, and sinking at his feet I begged of him to kill me also.

"'No,' he coarsely replied, 'you're a handsome wench and will make a capital Indian squaw,' or words to that effect. He then led or rather dragged me down the knoll to the cattle yard, where he bound my wrists and then made them fast to a stake, so that I could not escape. He then returned to his companions, and I could hear them yelling, whooping, and laughing for some minutes, when they all came down together, with four bloody scalps hanging to the belts of the renegade and one other. The latter was in advance, and in his hand he held a burning brand. Approaching the barn, he cast it into the hay loft. Instantly the fire flashed up, and spreading rapidly, soon burst through the roof, and wrapped the whole building in flames. At the same moment

the flames burst out of the cabin, and perceiving this, the Indians set up another horrible yell of triumph, and disappeared into the thicket, the renegade cutting my cords and hurrying me along with the rest.

"For some distance no pains were taken to conceal our course, and this gave me hope that you might return, and getting assistance from Fort Baker might follow and overtake us. But this hope, faint as it was, was soon destroyed, for, reaching the most dense part of the thicket, the Indians came to a halt, and had a long consultation together in their own language. Then the renegade turned to me and inquired what person had left our cabin that morning and gone in the same direction he had himself taken the day before. I replied, a hunter. He then inquired if he belonged to the family—if he had gone to follow his trail—and if he was expected soon to return. These questions I refused to answer, when he struck me with the flat of his hand."

"The villian!" exclaimed Albert, indignantly. "Oh, that I had been there, to have felled the monster to the earth! To strike you, dear Rose! But I am revenged now and so let him go. But did you answer his questions then, Rose?"

"No, and I firmly told him I never would. He might kill me but he had not the power to make me speak. He saw I was determined, and with an oath he turned to the Indians, and again they held a long consultation. From their gestures and the animated, almost angry discussion that took place, I judged that a part were for going forward, and the others for remaining where they were, in the hope that you

would soon return, when they might either kill or capture you.

"At length the matter became settled, and the renegade informed me, with a savage grin of exultation, that they had decided to await the hunter's return. This alarmed me terribly, and I believe I suffered more in that hour of dread suspense than at any other time before or since; at least I was more keenly alive to fear and the horrors of my situation. Every leaf that moved, my excited imagination converted into the sound of your approaching footsteps, and a thousand times did I fancy I could see you in the agonies of dying by the bloody tomahawk or murderous rifle. Gladly then would I have given them my life to have saved yours."

"Bless you, for an angel, dearest Rose!—bless you!" cried Albert, again drawing her closer to his beating heart. "Oh, what have I ever done to deserve this pure, holy, unselfish affection?"

Rose laid her face against his manly breast and wept; her voice she dared not trust in reply. After several moments of silence, broken only by her sobs, she proceeded:

"At length, to my unspeakable delight, I saw the party that had yielded in the argument begin to show signs of uneasiness and impatience. Then another council was held, and a single warrior was sent out on the trail toward the burning building. In less than a quarter of an hour he returned, and his report seemed decisive of the matter in agitation, and instantly preparations were made for departure. The renegade now told me I must follow him, and he led the way to the bed of the creek, and each of

the others, myself next in line, entered the water single file. I now saw, by this precaution, that the party were as anxious to break the trail as before they had been careless in leaving it open, and it gave me both pleasure and pain—pleasure, because I believed you would now escape; pain, because I believed that the trail would be so broken that none could follow it, and consequently that a long, hopeless captivity or death was before me. But, like you, I prayed to God for strength to support me under my trials, and I bore up with what fortitude I could.

"We continued in the creek down to the Captina, in which I was made to wade a considerable distance along the beach when, the water becoming too deep, we landed, and followed its windings down to the Ohio, where the whole party swam across, dragging me over on a driftlog.

"But why pursue my story in detail? You followed the trail, and consequently know all the strategems used by the savages to prevent your finding them."

"I do, and but for the superior knowledge of my backwoods friend, I fear they would have been successful. From all appearances, they must at one time have traveled very fast."

"They did, and it pained me to keep up with them. At last my feet became so swollen and sore that every step I took almost made me cry aloud."

"Poor Rose," sighed Albert. "I hope your troubles are nearly over now. When Wetzel returns, and we both get refreshed by food, I will make you some rude moccasins, and we will then set out for Fort Harmar, making easy stages. Once there, dear Rose, it shall be the sole aim of my life to make you happy."

To beguile the time, Rose now requested Albert to give her an account of his own adventures, beginning where he had left off, for a part he had already told her. He was about to comply, when Rose grasped his arm in terror, and in a low, trembling tone, exclaimed:

"Hark! I hear a noise, as of persons running. God grant it be not Indians!"

"It grows louder, and consequently draws near," said Albert, in that low, breathless tone that denotes excitement allied to fear. "Keep quiet, Rose—keep quiet! Do not stir, on your life!" he added, as slowly and cautiously he raised himself above the low bushes in which he was concealed, and peered eagerly around.

Nothing could he see; but the noise was evidently approaching from behind a thicket on the opposite side of the creek. Deliberately raising his rifle to his shoulder, he fixed his eye steadily in that direction, and awaited the result. Every moment the sounds grew more audible as the cause drew nearer, and Albert could feel the hands of Rose tremble as she clung to his knees in alarm.

"Down, down, dear Albert," she cried, "or you will be seen and killed! Oh, for God's sake, do not expose yourself!" she added, pleadingly.

"Hist!" said the other; and as he spoke his eye was already glancing along the barrel of his deadly rifle.

The next moment the bushes skirting the creek were violently agitated, there was a heavy splash in the water, and a noble deer bounded into view. Instantly he recoiled in dismay—for the rank smell of blood of his foemen had reached him. But he was

doomed. The shriek of a female and the crack of a rifle, together awoke the echoes of the deep forest; and bounding forward a few paces the noble animal reared himself on his legs, staggered and rolling over upon his back, expired.

"Nay, Rose, be not alarmed!" said Albert, now addressing her in a gentle tone. "Providence has kindly sent us a deer, and I have killed it."

"Thank heaven!" ejaculated the other, fervently. "I was fearful it was our common enemy. But the animal was frightened, was it not, Albert?"

"Ay, very much; but doubtless our friend was the cause. I would he were here now. Though, if within sound of my rifle, he will speedily return, well knowing it would not have been discharged needlessly."

"You think, then, Albert, we have no reason to apprehend anything serious from the fright of this animal?"

"God forbid that we should!" said Albert, feeling, from some unknown cause, secretly uneasy, though he took good care to conceal his forebodings from the other. "I will reload my rifle and then endeavor to prepare such a meal as our limited circumstances will permit."

In a short time his piece was recharged, and, bidding Rose remain where she was till all was ready, he leaned the muzzle against a tree, and drawing his knife at once fell upon the carcass of the deer. Having selected a spot to his liking he rekindled the Indian camp-fire, and cutting the meat into thin slices, attached it to roasting sticks, and so placed them that it would soon be done thoroughly.

Hunger, by this time, had become very acute with

both Albert and Rose, and the savory smell of the meat, as it roasted at the fire, gave them a keenness of appetite that neither had felt since the heart-rending tragedy that had robbed them of all their kindred. As soon as the steak was fairly cooked Albert carried a piece to Rose, who, on tasting it, exclaimed:

"It is the sweetest morsel I ever ate."

"I agree with you," returned Albert, as he followed her example. "Such," he continued, "is the effect of hunger under peculiar circumstances. We now think this delicious, without seasoning or bread, which at one time we could not so have eaten. Those who have never known hunger know not the value of food, and it is just the same with everything else; by the loss of the blessings we have had do we only learn to prize them at their true worth. If no other good comes of our trials, I trust they will teach us not to repine without cause, as thousands do who have never known adversity. I do not set up for a moralizer, nor do I believe in special dispensations, but I speak truly, from my heart, when I say I believe our adversities, if rightly viewed, become ultimate benefits, either in fitting us more properly to live here, or to go hence to the state that lieth beyond human ken. God ordereth all things, and He alone knoweth what is best, and though He may not change a single law of nature to reward or chastise—as a special dispensation would seem to imply—yet He may so place us upon this great wheel of events that combined circumstances shall throw around us a chain of afflictions that, in the end, as I have said, will result to our good. There-

fore, let the moral be deducted from this, that whatever is, is best."

"Such," answered Rose, "I believe to be a true doctrine, and it certainly is a consoling one to those who have been or may be tried like ourselves."

Thus conversing, our young lovers finished their frugal repast, and found themselves refreshed to a degree far beyond their expectations.

"I feel now," said Rose, "as if I had strength for the journey."

"I would that Wetzel were come!" returned the other; "for we should improve the day, as best we can, in increasing the distance between us and our enemies. I will employ the time, however, in constructing you a pair of moccasins from the hide of this animal."

Saying this, Albert advanced to the deer, and bending over it commenced removing its hide. He was thus busied, when suddenly he heard a shriek from Rose that made his heart fairly leap to his throat. Hardly conscious of what he did, he sprang for his rifle, but he was too late. Already a swarthy savage had grasped it, and the horrid yells of more than twenty others had sounded in his ear. At the same instant a blow on the head from behind laid him senseless upon the earth.

Chapter IX

THE RESCUE

When our young hero again recovered his senses he found himself lying on his back, but not where he had fallen, and a party of some five or six savages standing around him, apparently holding a consultation. During his state of unconsciousness he had, contrary to their usual custom, been removed several hundred yards from the camp; but for what purpose was known only to his captors, though they probably supposed a considerable party of whites to be near, and did this as a necessary precaution.

At first, on regaining his senses, Albert, as might naturally be supposed looked around him with a bewildered air. Where he was he could not tell. Gradually a recollection of events returned to him, but what time had elapsed since his fall he had no means of knowing. Now he thought of Rose, and he turned an eager look in every direction, but she was nowhere to be seen. Then came the horrible thought that perhaps she had been murdered, and we leave the reader to imagine his feelings. Could he conscientiously sustain his philosophy now that "whatever is, is for the best?" Certain it is, that he had to put it to one of the severest tests that a mortal is ever called upon to undergo, and if he somewhat shrunk from the terrible ordeal, with a repining thought, it must be attributed rather to a weakness

of human nature—a yielding to bitter circumstances —than to a positive change in his belief of the wise orderings of a Divine Providence.

Albert was a young man of strong physical and mental abilities, and without possessing that coarse and reckless hardihood which was so characteristic of a large portion of the earliest pioneers, he was as well fitted perhaps, by nature and education, to sustain himself, under all his severe afflictions, though in a different manner, as the best of them. Keenly sensitive to the highest degree—passionate in extreme—of an ardent, impulsive temperament, and prone to give full sway to his feelings, he yet possessed a self-command and a fortitude, when brought to the last trial, that surprised even himself. It is an undeniable truth that no one knows what he can undergo till he is tried, and those who take light griefs in a violent outward semblance are often capable of passing triumphantly through the most fiery ordeals of affliction and adversity.

On beholding his friends murdered, Albert had felt that, but for the escape of her he loved, and but for the hope of restoring her to liberty and happiness, he must have sunk under the awful blow. Yet now, in a moment of triumph and comparative felicity, she had not only been suddenly snatched from him, most probably forever, but he had been made a captive himself to a ruthless foe, and still he was able to bear his misfortune without entirely sinking under a crushing weight of despair. She might be dead, for all he knew to the contrary—or even, at the best, was a hopeless prisoner—and still he lived on, bearing his second griefs even more manfully than he did

the first, yet with no dulled faculties, but with sensations as keenly alive to acute suffering as then.

Feeling a pain in his head, Albert raised his hand to it, and, as he drew it back, all bloody, he for the first time became aware that he had been so seriously wounded. His wonder now was that he had not immediately been dispatched, or at least scalped, and left on the ground for dead. He had been struck on the back of the head, evidently, with a heavy club, or the stock of a musket, and though no bone had been fractured, the flesh had been divided, so as to leave a gaping wound from which the blood had flowed freely and clotted in his hair. No attempt had been made to dress the wound; but he had been raised just as he had fallen and borne to the spot where he now found himself, and where, it would appear, he had been deposited by his captors till a short council should decide upon his fate.

On finding their prisoner had fully recovered his consciousness, a tall, athletic warrior, who appeared to be the leader of the party, now approached him, and in tolerable English said:

"Pale-face brave—him kill so warrior," holding up four fingers to denote the number of slain.

As to this Albert did not see proper to reply, not being fully aware what kind of an answer would be politic, the other continued:

"Warrior lose scalp—pale-face no got him—squaw no got him—who got him?"

"Did not the girl tell you?" inquired Albert, anxious to learn whether Rose was living or dead, and at the same time he raised himself to a sitting posture.

"No ask him," was the reply.

"And why did you not ask her?" pursued Albert.

"Him gone."

"Dead, do you mean?"

"Him gone," was the still evasive reply, "You tell."

"If you will answer my question, chief, I will answer yours—not otherwise."

"Me Ogwehea," rejoined the savage, touching his breast, "no chief. Tarhe chief—great chief. Ogwehea great warrior—kill so scalp," holding up eight fingers.

"But you have not answered my question Ogwehea. Tell me whether the girl is living or dead, and I will tell you what has become of your brothers' scalps, for I see by your dress and war-paint that you belong to the same tribe."

"Squaw dead," answered the Indian.

"Oh, God!" groaned Albert, bowing his head upon his hands, and struggling manfully with his feelings.

For a minute or two the savage watched him in silence, and then touching him on the shoulder said:

"Ogwehea tell pale-face—pale-face not tell Ogwehea. Who scalp got?"

For some moments longer Albert hesitated what to reply. Although the Indian had said that Rose was dead, he could hardly credit the idea that they would kill a female, and yet spare his own life; and if living, he wished to answer in such a way that it might result to her benefit, though in ever so slight a degree. Should he say the scalps were in possession of a large party of whites, who were near, the Indians might prowl around for days waiting to surprise them—as he could easily account for the absence

of all traces, by saying they had hid their trail in the water—and this delay might give Wetzel time to reach Baker's Fort, and bring up the garrison to his rescue. On the other hand, it might induce the Indians to set off for their villages with extra speed, and if Rose were really a prisoner and should lag behind—as in her present weak condition he knew she must—they might tomahawk her to get rid of the trouble of forcing her along, and also in order to quicken their progress. Again, should he tell them the scalps were in possession of a single hunter, they might find the trail of Wetzel, follow it, and come upon his friend unawares, and either kill or make him a prisoner also, and thus, their security being increased, they might venture down upon the settlers and again put the tomahawk and brand to their fearful work. But on the other hand again, their very security might relax their vigilance, and give him an opportunity to effect an escape. There was something in favor and against either tale, and Albert was sorely perplexed to decide as to which would be the most politic. At last he resolved on telling the plain truth, for, after a careful examination, he came to the conclusion that the chances of escape were in favor of this, and he trusted that Wetzel, with his superior backwoods skill and native sagacity, would be able to outwit his foes.

His decision formed, Albert at once proceeded to give the already impatient Indian a few brief facts touching the murder of his family, the capture of Rose, the following of her trail, and the venegeance he and only one other had taken upon their foes.

Ogwehea heard him through without betraying the

slightest passing thought or emotion; but when he had concluded the savage gave a satisfied grunt, and there was the slightest shade of admiration expressed in his eye, as he ejaculated, with the deep gutteral accent peculiar to the Indian:

"Pale-face brave."

He then walked back to his companions, who had been standing apart, silently awaiting the termination of his interview with the prisoner, and communicated to them what he had learned. Immediately a messenger was dispatched to the other division, for the Indians, as the reader has no doubt divined, had already formed two distinct companies, which was also holding a consultation not far off. In a few minutes the messenger returned and presently all but two, who were left as guard over Albert, departed; but for what purpose the latter had no means of knowing, and it is not our design here to explain.

After an absence of more than an hour, during which our hero was left to his own reflections, with no other restraint upon him than the knowledge that his every movement was closely watched, the party of four returned, and immediately took up their line of march, Ogwehea in advance. Keeping along the bank of the stream, they continued thus for an hour, Albert forming the center of the file, when they came to a halt, and held another short consultation, the object of which was to decide whether the prisoner should be bound or suffered to continue at liberty. The former was at length decided on, as a wise precaution, and accordingly they set about it at once. A stout thong of deer-skin was produced and Ogwe-

hea ordered our hero to place his hands behind him. He obeyed without a murmur, and they immediately bound the thong so tight around his wrists as to pain him exceedingly. This act showed they considered him a dangerous prisoner, and while he felt it to be a compliment to his bravery, he secretly admitted that it would have pleased him much better to have had such dubious flattery dispensed with.

The party now continued the same course for a mile or two further, when they suddenly entered the creek, and turning face about, continued in its bed back to the camp. The design of all this was very apparent to Albert. They probably discredited his story with regard to the number that had made the attack on the first captors of Rose, and as it was evidently their design not to return to their villages without more prisoners or scalps, they took this method to deceive their pursuers, should they have any, and baffle all attempts to follow their trail.

Some four hours had now been consumed since Albert's capture, and although he had been forced to walk a considerable distance, yet he was still at the very place where he had passed the night. He had thought himself miserable then; but oh! what a fearful change had there since been for the worse! He was then free, at least, and hope was bright, though somewhat dimmed by fear. Now he was a captive, bound, with nothing cheering in prospect. And when he recalled the happy moments he had spent with her he loved, and contrasted them with his present gloomy prospects, and the awful uncertainty that hung over the object of his affections, he indeed felt as if more than mortal power was required

to sustain him. He gazed upon the spot where he had last seen Rose, and, in spite of all the fortitude he could summon to his aid, he felt his heart swell almost to bursting with grief, and he turned away his face, unable to endure the sight any longer.

Soon after the halt of the captors of Albert at this place, they were joined by some five or six warriors of the other division, when all entered the creek, and set off together, taking Albert along, and shaping their course so as to strike the Ohio at its nearest point. How many were left behind he knew not, nor what had become of little Rose. Could it be possible that the words of Ogwehea were true, and that Rose was in reality dead? Oh! It was a fearful thought; but he had no reason, other than that we have named, for thinking the contrary, and his fears made the worst an almost terrible reality.

For some two or three miles the Indian party—now numbering no less than twelve athletic warriors, commanded by Ogwehea—continued in the creek. When, thinking sufficient precautions had been taken to render them secure against pursuers, they came out, and struck off across the forest, single file—first sending off two or three of the party as scouts to give the alarm in case of danger, or warn them of the vicinity of an enemy that might fall an easy prey.

The tramp was long and tedious to Albert, and as the sun went down behind the Western hills he felt that his sun of hope was also setting. Nothing had occurred throughout the day, beyond what we have given, worthy of being recorded in these pages. The scouts had not made their appearance since their

departure; but as this was not an unusual thing, it occasioned no alarm, and elicited no remark from any of the party. In fact, it rather gave a feeling of security, as it was common for them to be absent days at a time, when everything remained peaceful.

As night drew on the Indians selected a proper place for encamping, and kindled a fire. The spot chosen was wild and picturesque, it being at the foot of a steep hill, and the junction of a ravine with a small rivulet, where the branching hemlocks, growing thick, almost excluded the light of day. On the other side of the rivulet, or creek—as every small stream was almost invariably denominated by the early settlers—another steep hill came down to the water, also covered with hemlocks, so that in broad daylight it was impossible to see more than fifty yards in any direction, and a glance at the sky overhead could only here and there be had through an occasional gothic window in this leaf-matted, evergreen dome of nature.

Albert was now made fast to a small tree by a strip of deer-skin passing around his neck and ankles, much in the same manner as Rose had been confined the night before. His captors now liberated his hands, and offered him food and water—both of which he partook somewhat freely—he having by this time discovered that if the theory of going without eating was perfectly consistent with a captive overwhelmed with grief, yet that nature would assert her rights, by making long, weary marches the most unfortunate times in the world to put such theories into practice.

Some half an hour after his meal was finished,

Albert, who had begun to congratulate himself on being left in such a manner that he could pass the night with tolerable ease—and perhaps, while his captors were asleep, be enabled to make his escape—was sorely disappointed by the precautions the Indians now saw proper to take. Instead of his hands being left at liberty, he was now placed on his back, and his wrists tightly corded to a stick that ran along the ground under his shoulders. This done, a second stick was placed under his back lengthwise, so that the two would form a rude cross; and to this was bound his ankles—the strip of deer-skin around his neck still remaining, with the other end fast to a tree. Nothing could be more uncomfortable than this mode of being confined. It was impossible for him to move a hand or foot, while the sticks, pressing hard against his back and shoulders, stopped the circulation of the blood, and completely benumbed him. Notwithstanding this painful position, so fatigued was he, that he soon fell asleep, and slept soundly for several hours.

At daylight the Indians were stirring; and one of their first acts was to release their prisoner from his painful confinement. It was some time, however, before he could stand, and his wrists and ankles were found to be considerably swollen. Gradually he recovered the use of his limbs, and by the time he had done so the whole party was ready for a start. Swallowing a hasty breakfast, they again set out, still shaping their course toward the Ohio, but changing the first direction so as to strike it at a point some half way between Baker's Fort and Fort Harmar.

Nothing of interest occurred till about midday, when, just as they had halted beside a spring of cool water to take some refreshments, one of the scouts came in with a hasty step. There is rarely anything in the expression of an Indian's countenance by which one can judge of the thoughts and emotions that lie hidden under the stern, warlike exterior, and so it was with the present scout, though he had most important matters to communicate. Gliding quietly into the circle of warriors, he stood silent, awaiting to be addressed by the leader of the party; but as soon as this Indian formality had been complied with, he spoke rapidly for several minutes. Although Albert could not understand a word he uttered yet he felt satisfied, by his gestures, and the manner of the other savages, that what he communicated was of grave import. Several times their hands clutched their weapons convulsively, and many a dark, menacing look was turned upon their prisoner, as though they meditated immediate death to him.

When the messenger had done speaking, all drew together, and a hasty council was held, which lasted some five minutes. As soon as this was over, all ate hurriedly, when the scout and two companions withdrew from the others and disappeared, leaving only seven in the party that guarded the prisoner. The Indians now offered the latter some food—by which he judged that if they had decided to take his life, his death was reserved to some future period. As soon as he had eaten, the whole party resumed their journey.

Nothing of importance occurred throughout the day, though Albert did not fail to notice that the

Indians were more than doubly guarded in all their movements.

Just as the sun was setting they reached the northern bank of the Ohio, and selecting a suitable place, encamped for the night—our young hero receiving precisely the same treatment as the night before. None of the scouts returned, and this, instead of increasing the confidence of the savages in their own security, as it had appeared to do on a previous occasion, seemed to give them more uneasiness than they cared to have expressed in their manner. Toward morning it set in to rain. The water extinguishing the fire, and drenching our hero, would have made his condition almost intolerable, but that, in saturating the deer-skin thongs that bound him, it caused them to give in such a way that his swollen limbs found considerable relief. Sleep was, of course, out of the question with all parties, and the Indians arose and paced around the camp until daylight, but did not attempt to rekindle the fire.

Following the windings of the Ohio, the party set off at daybreak down stream, the rain continuing unabated till near midday, when it ceased, and the clouds broke away, though they remained floating through the humid atmosphere till sundown.

As soon as the rain was over a short consultation was held, and a warrior sent off as a scout. Two hours after a second departed, and about two hours later a third. As none of these had returned when his captors halted for the night, Albert began to suspect that his captors must be nearing their destination and were sending these separate scouts ahead to apprise different villages of their approach

and to assemble them for the torture of their white captive.

The place selected by the Indians for a camp much resembled the one in which little Forest Rose had been held a captive a few nights before. There was precisely the same number of captors, and they soon stretched themselves around the fire much as then, with the exception that the prisoner was left more by himself—there being no one immediately on either side of him. As if to complete the resemblance a tremendous sycamore stood within a few feet of where Albert rested his head, its broad arms spreading a thick canopy of leaves over the whole camp. The view in the forest was not so extended, owing to a thicket of hazel, which cut it off on two sides, within a few feet of the fire, and on the other sides the fire light flashed upon the dark waters of the Ohio, which here made a short bend around the point on which the camp was located. The Indians appeared to deem it useless to place a sentinel to guard their camp, since they had bound their prisoner with their usual care. For a long time, however, they all kept awake; but gradually one after another grew drowsy and closed his eyes, and the last one had just passed to a stage of forgetfulness, when the notes of a whip-poor-will sounded. This was heard by one or two of the party; but being a familiar sound to them caused no alarm, and by the time its soft strain was finished they had forgotten having heard it, and passed into a slumber heavier than ever.

Not so our hero. He lay awake and listened till a doubt of its being other than it seemed began to cross his mind and cause him the most painful

feeling of disappointment. But he was not suffered to despair entirely. After the lapse of some quarter of an hour, during which he had heard nothing but the deep roar of the forest, the howlings of a distant pack of wolves, and seen nothing save the quivering of the green leaves over his head, and occasionally a flickering shadow cast by the fire upon the wall of the thicket, he felt something cold touch one of his outstretched hands.

Turning his eyes in that direction he beheld the glittering blade of a knife, attached to a long stick, one end of which was concealed behind the tree. Instead of alarm, this caused the same intense inward joy that a captive would feel in a prison on beholding an instrument at work to sever the bars that confined him from the world. He did not move—he scarcely breathed—so fearful was he that the slightest sound might awaken his captors, and destroy his hope of escape. Slowly the knife turned, guided by an unseen hand, and gliding under his wrists severed the thong that bound his arm. Then it was carefully moved to the other, and the ligature cut in the same manner. Albert now felt that both arms were free; but still he let them rest in the same position as before, while the blade of the knife glided back out of his sight. A minute or two elapsed, during which he did not move, when he felt the haft of the knife in his hand, and saw the blade sticking in the end of a pole. His hand closed upon it, the pole was withdrawn, and he found himself master of a weapon, by which he could in an instant sever his remaining fetters, and be once more at liberty. Judge of his feelings then,

reader, for pen of ours has not power to describe them.

But he did not stop long to rejoice, for action was necessary. Raising himself carefully, he slipped his hand down to his feet, and the next moment he was free, though his feet were so benumbed he thought it prudent not to attempt to use them at once.

In a few minutes he found, to his great delight, that all his limbs were completely under his control. He then rose carefully, and commenced moving cautiously toward the tree behind which he knew to be concealed the agent, who had come so mysteriously and so opportunely to his aid. He had advanced only a few steps, when his foot unfortunately pressed on a dry stick. It snapped, with a sharp noise; and instantly one of the savages sprang up, and perceiving the prisoner about to escape, grasped his rifle, and gave a yell that awoke the others. At the same moment Albert sprang behind the tree, the crack of a rifle was heard, and the savage, bounding from the earth, with a yell, fell back into the fire. The others, suddenly aroused from their sleep, for an instant stood bewildered. That moment was fatal to another; for the report of a second rifle rung out, and the bullet, true to the unerring eye that guided it, laid another dead in his tracks. The two remaining savages, undecided no longer and with yells of dismay, bounded into the hazel thicket, and were lost to sight.

As the last one disappeared a heavy hand was placed on the shoulder of Albert, and the words, "You're saved, lad," sounded joyfully in his ear.

His hand closed upon it, the pole was withdrawn, and he found himself master of a weapon.

Chapter X

THE LOVED ONE LOST

"My old and tried friend Lewis Wetzel, God bless you!" was the feeling reply of Albert, as he beheld, by the light of the fire, the coarse, sunburnt features of the old hunter, sympathetically upon him. "God bless you!" he repeated, as he grasped the horny hand of the other in both his own, while tears of joy flowed freely down his pale face. "May God desert me in my hour of need, if ever I am so ungrateful as to forget this noble act of unselfish generosity."

"Now you're makin' too much on't," was the characteristic reply of the gallant backwoodsman. "I don't deny it' bein' a kindly act to set you free, an' meant as such by me; but I do deny, most powerful, that it was a unselfish one, as you tarm it, for to kill them thar red sons o' Satan has bin a heap o' rale, nateral fun to me, I assure ye, on the honor o' a white gintleman. Look here!" and Wetzel showed eight fresh scalps at his belt, beside the four taken from the captors of Rose.

"Is it possible!" cried Albert, "that you alone have killed all the scouts that have been sent out from this party of twelve warriors?"

"Ef you don't b'lieve it," replied the other, coolly, "jest ye take a couple o' day's tramp with me, an' I'll show ye the bones of every mother's son on 'em—that is, ef they ever had a mother, which I'm dubious

of—seein' as how I think they must be the rale imps of Satan, an' no mistake."

"But how in the name of heaven did you accomplish this wonderful feat? I admit I had some suspicions that you were about, and would render it difficult for some of them to find their way back—I may say, I knew by the manner of the savages when the first scout returned, that something alarming had occurred, though it has puzzled me at times since to account for their actions; but this exceeds the wildest fancies of romance—that eight powerful men should be sent against one, and that one should kill them all, and come triumphantly to the camp of the others, and there slay two more. Wetzel, you deserve to be immortalized for your heroism—your successful exploits!"

"Well," answered the other quietly, "as to 'mortalizin', as ye tarm it, I don't know much about that. But one think I do know, master Albert, that you're most powerful mistaken, when you call these here varmints men. I know the Moravians preach up some sich kind o' tarms; but ef they know'd as much about them as I do, they'd be —— glad to quit it, I tell ye. Now they ain't men, no more nor I is a nigger—an' it makes my blood fairly bile to hear a white gintleman call 'em so. Now take that thar all back, master Albert, an' I'll tell my adventur's with the red niggers, right straight for'ard; but ef ye don't I'll jest let ye guess' em yourself."

"Call them what you please," rejoined Albert. "I merely used the term, as the first that suggested itself. I meant no offense, I assure you. But before

you begin, a word about Rose. Do you know what has become of her? Whether she is living or dead?"

"I don't know the first thing," was the reply.

"Alas!" groaned Albert, giving way to a burst of grief at the thought, "I fear I shall never behold her sweet face again. All are gone now, my friend—all—and I am left alone like a solitary tree when the forest is felled around it. Oh, God! It is terrible! Terrible!—and you must pardon me, my friend, if I forget my manhood, and weep like a child," and covering his face with his hands he sank down by the tree, and now, that he had no longer to fear for himself, gave vent to the griefs of his pent-up heart.

Wetzel gazed silently upon him, and could his face —which was now shaded from the light of the fire, by the huge sycamore behind which he stood—have been seen, it would have been perceived that the hard muscles of his features were relaxed to a softened expression, and that a manly tear of sympathy dimmed his eye. For some time he did not speak; but, as we have said, gazed silently upon the other, who seemed like one heart-broken. Then he roused himself, and drawing his hard and bloody hand across his eyes, said, in a tone softened to a degree unusual to him:

"Come, come lad—don't take on so, don't—it makes me feel womanish to see you—it does indeed, on the honor o' a white gintleman. The gal, I reckon, 's a captive. For ef they didn't kill ye, I don't see no reason why they should her, and its maybe we can trail her out again, and fotch her off alive."

At these words, Albert looked up, and rising, he took the hand of Wetzel and pressed it warmly.

"God bless you!" he said, "for giving me the only consolation I have felt since my own capture. Oh! If we could only rescue her, my friend! But I fear you create a hope that can never be realized—for one of the savages informed me that Rose is dead. Do you really think she is living, Wetzel, and that there is any possible chance of finding her? Speak, my friend! Oh! Speak, and do not deceive me!—for hopes once raised again, and followed by a heart-sickening disappointment, would be more than I could bear and live."

"Wall, in course I can't say for sartin that the gal's alive," answered the other; "but I can say I believe it. Though whether we'll ever find her agin's another question."

"You think, then, there is no prospect of that?" cried Albert, in great agitation.

"I don't say thar's no prospect—only it's powerful onsartin. In course ef she's alive, she'll hev reached the Injin village of her captors afore we could ketch her, an' besides, this here rain has spiled the trail, and no mistake—so thar'll be no sign to go by. Still ef we could find out which tribe's got her, it's maybe we mought sneak around an' fotch her off—tho' I'll hev to allow thar's a heap o' chances agin it whar thar's one for it."

"I see, I see!" groaned Albert. "She is lost to me forever. Oh! God, help me! I am utterly miserable and my life is valueless now."

"What! Talking that way agin, arter all that the varmints have done to make you a inemy! Hain't you no desire to git revenge?"

"Right, Wetzel!" cried the other, seizing the hand of the hunter, with a nervous grasp, while a wild light gleamed from his blue eye. "Right, my friend! You remind me that I have something to live for. Henceforth all pity shall be banished from my heart, and I will have such dark revenge on the accursed race of Indians, that the story of my wrongs and vengeance shall live in tradition on the borders, when all that is of me is dust. To this I swear by all my hopes of peace hereafter."

"Now I know ye for one in whom I can put confidence," returned Wetzel exultingly, "an' I swear to stand by ye, an' see ye through, as long as this here right arm's got strength to skin a nigger."

"Are not those Indians Wyandotts?" asked Albert, as one suddenly struck with a new thought.

"Why, it's powerful hard tellin' what they is," answered the other. "Some on 'em, I reckon, is Wyandotts, an' some on 'em Shawnees, an' the rest on 'em is a mixed set, as don't belong nowhar in pertikelar, an' to nobody but themselves, the cusses. But why do ye ask?"

"Why, the thought occurred to me, that if we could find out to what tribe they belonged, we might look there to find Rose, in case she is now a prisoner."

"It don't foller, no it don't, that she'd be held by any pertikelar tribe in this case; but most like that some red son o' Satan 'ud claim her for his squaw, an' take her home to whar-somever he belonged."

"But you saw that all were painted and dressed much alike, which would seem to imply, that if of different tribes, they were all leagued, and fighting for one common purpose."

"For that thar matter, thar's a league amongst all the Injins at this minute, to kill all the whites they can, an' help one another to cl'ar the gineral foe—so that don't prove nothin'. But, howsomever, as these here heathen, in nateral reason, fitted themselves for the warpath at the Wyandott town, it's nateral them as took off Rose should go back thar, and thar'll be the place to look for her—though mind, now, I tell ye, that ef she's thar, it'll be next thing to impossible to diskiver it—an' a parfect miracle to git her away—for thar's more'n five hundred warriors in the tribe."

"Only prove to me she is there, and I will either set her free, alone and unaided, or die in the attempt," rejoined Albert, with a lover's air of determination.

"Well, I see you're gittin' foolish agin," said Wetzel in reply; "an' I'm powerful sorry to see it, case it argefies that you're losin' your senses. Ye mought die in the attempt, that's sartin, but as to gittin' the gal away without at least a hundred followers, you mought jest as well think o' carryin' off the Ohio on your back. It's a dead onpossibility, an' don't allow no reasonin' whatsomever."

"What then is to be done?" cried the other in despair.

"Why, ef it'll make ye feel any better satisfied we'll scout up that way together, an' see what we can see, and larn what we can larn. And ef anything favors us, we'll act accordin' to sarcumstances."

"Your hand on it," rejoined Albert, "for in spite of all your discouragements you give me new hope. You are equal to a host yourself, Wetzel, as your

success in killing ten savages alone, and liberating me, amply proves."

"Why, I've done somethin' in the way o' thinnin' the red varmints, I don't deny; but I'd hate to hev ye count too much on me, for fear I mought fail. I'll do all I can, though, I pledge ye the honor o' a white gintleman—though I'll hev to allow I've had oncommon luck for the last few days."

"But I interrupted your story," replied Albert. "Pray tell me how you accomplished the marvelous feat of killing such a party of warriors, and coming off scratchless?—for you do not show a wound."

The other now laughed heartily, in his quiet way, at the recollection, and then made reply:

"Why, I'll tell ye—"

"Yet stay," interrupted the other. "Are we not in danger here from the two savages that have escaped?"

"Not a bit on't," answered Wetzel, confidently—"not a bit on't." And again he indulged in another peculiar laugh. "You may depind on't, them thar imps o' Satan is making tracks home'ard just as fast as thar greasy legs can carry 'em—for I knowed by thar hollar they were frightened a'most to death. I've watched 'em a good deal, an' know'd they was most powerful skeered aforehand—for the thick heads couldn't give a reason why thar painted comrades didn't come back to tell 'em the news consarnin' the single trail o' a white gintleman that the first one diskivered. They thought it war the devil, or some other travlin' spirit, an' all thunder couldn't make 'em b'lieve it was only a human, arter all. They'll hev a powerful story to tell thar rela-

tions, when they git back home, ef they ever do, you may depind on that. Howsomever, I'm al'ays for keepin' on the safe side, when thar's nothin' lost by it, an' so it'll be best, I reckon, to keep in the shadder here till mornin', for fear the scamps mought possibly prowl around and draw a bead on us onawares. An' now I'll tell ye my story, though I must say aforehand, thar's nothin' wonderful in it at all. It's only natur' acted right straight up to natur'."

"Soon arter I left you, to go in search o' a deer, I got on the trail o' one o' the critters, an' I follered it for more'n a mile, when all at once it came boundin' by me, an' broke full tear in your direction. I could hev shot it jest as easy as let it alone; but thinks I, deers don't run for nothin' right past a white gintleman as is death on sightin', an' so I held up to see what mought be the matter. For fear o' accidents, I took to the drink right sudden; and arter I'd got hid parfectly, I waited, with both eyes skinned, to see what 'ud come on't. Arter a while, I seed a streaked savage travelin' right fast arter the deer, an' puttin' Killnigger up to my face, I was jest on the point o' axin' him to stop an' leave me his scalp, when I seed another pop out o' the woods, an' I held back. Jest about this time, I heard the crack o' your rifle, and I knowed ayther a Injin or a deer war dead meat, for sartin, an' I war powerful skeered on your account and the gal's. But I know'd it war too late for me to do anything now, only watch the inemy, for the Injin cusses had heard the gun, an' war doin' some tall walkin' in that direction. Howsomever, I'd no notion o' desartin' ye, an' so I followed the stream up, takin' car' not to git exposed. I heard the gal

scream, but warn't near enough to see what was happenin'. I had to be very pertikelar now, an' it took me a good bit afore I got up agin the camp, an' then nayther white gintleman nor red nigger was about. I didn't like to look too car'ful jest then, an' I went on above, an' when I got to a place as suited me, I jest sot down an' waited. I could jest diskiver the wharabouts of the camp from whar I war, an' kept my eyes fixed on't, for I know'd somethin' about Injin strategy, an' I 'spected as how some on 'em 'ud wait thar for me; but I thought to myself, ef they did, they wouldn't turn out to be so powerful smart as they thought they war.

"Well, I'd bin thar an hour or two, I reckon, when I seed one o' the red cusses poke up his hed to look at somethin', an' it tickled me most powerful at the idee that he was lookin' for me, an' I all the time watchin' him. Well, down went his hed, an' another powerful long spell took place, when some half o' dozen o' the varmints crawled out o' thar hidin' place an' went down to the creek. Thinks I, that thar means somethin', an' I alters my sitiwation and got a peep o' the other cusses, what had ye in tow. 'Ah, ha,' says I, 'now I wouldn't wonder if thar mought be a heap o' fun afore the hull thing's settled', an' so I held on till I seed every devil on 'em startin' up stream, an' then I jest kept out o' thar sight, an' paddled my trotters a few, ye better b'lieve; though I took powerful pains not to rile the water, by keeping along on the stones.

"Arter I got fur enough, I took to the bank; but left a big trail that I know'd the varmints couldn't help seein', an' then I broke an' run for more'n a

mile, an' then got all ready for fun—for I know'd I'd be follered right sudden.

"Well, 'bout an hour or two arter, I seed two on 'em making right straight for me; but bein's how I didn't want to fire in hearin' of t'others, I put out ag'in, without thar seein, me, but I left a right smart chance o' trail behind, I tell ye. I kep out o' thar way for another mile when I turned, an' let the for'ard one hev old Killnigger's breakfast right plum in his gizzard. He doubled up as ef he'd got the bellyache, ye better b'lieve, an' then he sot down an' took a quiet die on't, all to himself. While the other scamp, thinkin' he'd got me sure, put on arter, with a most powerful yell. Well, I jest led him a thunderin' chase, for it tickled me to see him pant, an' look fierce as a panther as is jest agoin' to bite. Well, arter I'd got Killnigger loaded again, an' thought as how I'd fooled him about long enough, I up and gin him a hyster as sent him to kingdom-come afore he know'd what ailed him.

"Arter this, I didn't see no more savages that day, though I did find the tracks o' one cuss as had been sneakin' 'round, but they led straight off agin, an' I know'd by that, as how he'd gone on to tell the t'others he'd bin a disappointed nigger. Well, I follered back'ard on the tracks o' them I killed, and tuk thar scalps, an' then I kept on to tuther trail, an' sot out to come up behind your party, but night comin' on, I clim a tree, and slep in one o' its crotches till mornin'.

"But what's the use o' givin' ye all the pertikelars? I've said enough to let ye into the secret o' how I done the business for 'em. I jest kept sneakin'

'round an' when one o' the —— scouts would try to foller me, I'd lead him a good chase, an' then shoot an' scalp him—an' so I done with all on 'em. The last one I killed jest afore tonight, an' thinkin' as how I mought liberate ye, I took his rifle an' powder fixins, an' fotched 'em along; an' that's how, you see, I had two blazes at the niggers here. D'ye understand now?"

"I see," said Albert. "Your narration makes the matter appear very simple."

"I told ye so, I told ye so," returned the other. "I told ye thar warn't nothin' wonderful in it."

"The most wonderful part," rejoined Albert, "is that you can run as fast as an Indian, and load while running."

"All practice, lad, all practice. I larned to do that, by a heap o' tryin' when I was a boy, an' I've found it the best way, as ever invented, to kill the red imps o' Satan, without bein' in much danger yourself. You must larn to do it, Master Albert—you must larn to do it, an' then we together'd be wuth a rigiment o' green hands, in gatherin' scalps."

Albert and his companion passed the night in conversation near the camp of the enemy, neither venturing within the firelight, lest their foes might be watching them, and would thus have them at a fatal advantage. It was agreed, that as soon as daylight should enable them to leave the place with safety, both should set off in the direction of the camp where Rose had been recaptured, and, if it were possible to find the trail after so much rain, that they should follow it, and endeavor to learn her fate,

neither having any hope, now, that they could render her any assistance.

Accordingly, as soon as it was light enough to see distinctly, Wetzel took the trail of the living savages, and followed it for some half a mile; when becoming satisfied that they had made good their retreat without attempting a circuit to examine into the numbers of their foe, he returned to the camp, and forthwith proceeded to scalp the dead Indians. This done, our two adventurers made a breakfast on some jerked venison which they found on the persons of the dead savages—Albert, by this time, having totally lost the qualmishness for Indian food incident upon a first adventure. He then selected a rifle to suit him, took what powder and ball he could find, and in company with his gallant friend, set off for Will's Creek, the scene of many pleasant and painful recollections.

On this adventure it is not the design of our story to follow their progress in detail. Suffice it to say that a two day's march brought them in safety to the place they sought; but no trace of Rose, or her captors, or murderers, whichever they were, could be found, the rain, as Wetzel had conjectured, having completely obliterated their foot-prints. Two skeletons were seen on the ground, their bones already bleaching in the open air. They were the only remains of the renegade and the Indian, who had justly fallen by the hands of the avengers of their victims. Wild beasts had torn from them all that was eatable, and their bones were thus left to crumble to dust with the dissolving powers of time.

As the eye of Albert fell upon them, and the remem-

brance of all his sufferings, of which they were the main authors, came vividly before him, it was with stern satisfaction that, with the recollection, he could couple the death of one at least by his own hand. But he soon felt that, though vengeance might have full sway, it could not restore those who were gone—could not fill the aching void now left in his heart. He turned away in anguish of spirit, and almost wished he could change places with the dead. His eye fell upon the stake where poor little Rose had been confined, and sinking down upon the spot he gave way to his feelings in a series of heart-breaking sobs and groans.

Oh, Rose!" he said. "My poor little Forest Rose! Could I find and restore thee to liberty and happiness how freely would I lay down my life for the boon! Alas! It cannot be. Thou art gone—gone forever from him, who loves thee!"

Then, after giving vent to his feeling for a few minutes, he raised his head, and saw the old hunter standing near, silently gazing upon him, with a look of compassion.

"Alas! My friend," he added, slowly, rising to his feet, and grasping the hand of the other. "Alas! My friend, nothing is left me now but vengeance upon the foes of my race—and that I must have. Away with all feelings of pity!—henceforth my heart shall be steeled against the weak emotion. Wetzel, I am thine, to war against the savages till death. I have now no home, no kindred, and none to love or care for me." His voice faltered at the recollection, and tears dimmed his eyes, but hastily brushing them away, he added: "But I will be weak no longer, and

you shall see, my friend what a desperate man can dare do! Yet stay one moment. And bounding away to the little knoll where he had last seen Rose, he made an eager search, in the hope of finding some traces of her he loved. But he was again disappointed, and kneeling upon the earth, he silently commended her to the care of Him who notes even the fall of a sparrow, and then rejoining his companion, he said, "Come, lead on for I would quit this spot forever."

"Foller me, and you shall hev revenge to your heart's satisfaction," returned Wetzel, and he struck off through the forest, bending his steps westward, in the supposed direction taken by the savages.

For a few minutes a person stationed on the little hillock could have kept the forms of both in view, and then they were lost in the deep forest, which stretched away in an almost unbroken chain for hundreds of miles, even to the mighty prairies of the then unexplored far West.

Chapter XI

SEEKING THE LOST

For many days our two scouts continued to explore the forests to the west and north, but always meeting with disappointment in their quest for the captive Forest Rose. Time and again they fell upon the trails of small parties of savages, following them relentlessly until by stealth and sudden attack they added to the collection of scalps which Wetzel exulted in carrying with him, Albert doing his full share in bringing down the hated foe, but steadfastly refusing to have anything to do with the collection of the ghastly trophies of victory. At intervals of a few weeks or months they would return to their former haunts, thinking that, perchance, some news might have reached the white settlements regarding her whom they sought, or that by some miracle she might have been rescued from her captors or might have effected her escape from them.

At such times Wetzel would insist upon Albert making all inquiries at the forts and would meet him again at an appointed spot. Albert always noted upon his return to these meeting places that Wetzel had somehow disposed of all the scalps collected in the previous expedition, but as he never made reference to the manner of their disposal, Albert refrained from asking questions on the subject.

Some fourteen months had thus slipped away,

when we find the two on a more extended trip, having proceeded as far northwest as the site of the Indian village of Piqua, at one time the largest village of that region. Here they heard rumors of the projected campaign of General Anthony Wayne against the Indians of the lake region farther to the north, and decided to scout on up in that direction. After several days of hard travel they pitched camp one evening on the bank of a small creek in the neighborhood of what is now the city of Upper Sandusky. As they were about to lie down for a night's repose, Wetzel's quick ear detected a sound which set him on the alert for prowling savages. Seizing his rifle and bidding Albert follow, he quickly led beyond the circle of light from their campfire and halted to listen for a repetition of the sound. All was quiet, but still apprehensive, he proceeded, followed by Albert, to ascend a slight elevation around which at that point the stream made a sharp turn. Reaching the summit of the ridge, they dropped suddenly and noiselessly to the ground as they came within the range of light from a campfire at the base of the ridge, near which were seated two persons engaged in subdued conversation. Instinctively they leveled their trusty rifles at the two campers, Albert by settled agreement selecting the one on the right for his target, while Wetzel selected the other. At that moment one of the intended victims arose and Wetzel laid a detaining hand upon Albert's arm, as a signal to await developments. The camper proceeded across the circle of the firelight and stooped to pick up some brushwood with which to replenish the fire. Turning and approaching the firelight he displayed the unmis-

takeable features of a white man. To Albert's surprise and alarm, a low chuckle from Wetzel reached his ear, followed a moment later by a shout which caused the camper to drop the firewood, seize his rifle, and spring beyond the firelight, followed by his thoroughly aroused companion.

"Simon Butler!" exclaimed Wetzel in a joyous tone, "or I'm a red nigger for sartin."

"My old friend, Lewis Wetzel," came the returning cry, as one of the campers stepped from the shadows, "come on down here and give me a grab at your paw. Come on down, I say."

Wetzel was already on his feet and racing down the hillside toward the other. "Well, who'd o' ever thought either on us'd ever a pitched camp so near t'other, an' never knowed it." And seizing the hand of the other he shook it vigorously.

Albert had by this time sensed the situation and advanced to get a nearer view of this famous scout whose name was well known to him, as indeed it was alike to every white man of this northwest territory.

"Where on earth did you drop from?" inquired Butler, returning the handclasp most cordially and speaking with his characteristic Kentucky drawl. "It's sure good for sore eyes to see you again, friend Wetzel."

"Well," began Wetzel, with the intention of answering his friend's question, but the word stuck in his throat and then was violently expelled and blended with a yell as he bounded toward Butler's companion who had now come fully into the firelight. The other bounded forward and they fell into an embrace, but whether friendly or otherwise Albert

was at a loss to determine, until he noticed Butler indulging in a hearty laugh.

"Jake, you rascal," Wetzel ejaculated at last holding the other at arm's length and speaking with more feeling than Albert had ever heard in his voice, "I had old Killnigger pinted plum at your head, an' ef Butler hadn't got up for more wood, it's more'n likely I mought o' pulled the trigger."

"Oh, no, ye wouldn't o' done that, brother Lewis," replied the other confidently. "I know ye too well to think as ye'd shoot anybuddy in the back o' the head without first seein' his face."

"Don't be too sure about that, Jake," returned Wetzel. "I've knocked over so many red niggers aroun' campfires like this, that I git kind o' narvous whenever I git a chance at one o' the greasy ripscallions."

"Well, anyway, I'm glad Kenton got up to fix the fire—"

"Kenton!" exclaimed Wetzel, looking uncertainly from one to the other. "I don't understand—" he began, when he whom he had addressed as Butler interrupted.

"Yes, Lewis, you knew me as Simon Butler, the assumed name by which I was known in this country for many years. I'll tell you all of the story some time, but it's too long to begin now. When I was sixteen years old I left my home in Virginia and came to this country because I thought I had killed a young fellow in a fight over a girl. Fearing I would be followed and arrested for murder, I changed my name; but on a visit back to Virginia a few years

ago I learned that I had not killed the man after all and so resumed my rightful name.

"Ten to one," responded Wetzel, "ye found too that ye war glad the other feller got the gal."

"You're right about that," replied Kenton with a hearty laugh.

"In course!" pursued Wetzel. "They's none o' 'em ye can depind on. They never ought o' bin none o' 'em made, an' that's a fact—except one," he continued, looking meaningly at Albert.

The others looked inquiringly at Albert, who, embarrassed by the sudden turn in the conversation, was at a loss what to do or say. Perceiving this Wetzel came to his companion's rescue by remarking in an offhand manner, "It's too long a story, too, to begin tonight, but some other time I'll tell ye all about it."

Presently Wetzel and Albert returned to their own camp, extinguished their fire, and moved their outfits to the camp of their friends, Wetzel in the meantime having introduced to Albert his brother Jacob, scarcely less renowned on the border as a scout and Indian killer than himself. They all sat around the campfire until far into the night, talking in subdued tones of their plans and making occasional reference to their former experiences together as scouts in the unsettled regions along the Ohio river. Before lying down for the night Wetzel and Kenton scouted for a considerable distance around their camp for signs of savages that might be lurking on their trail, or camping by mere accident in the vicinity on their way to join the concerted movement of the Indians in opposition to the troops of Mad Anthony

Wayne. Having satisfied themselves that there was no immediate danger they returned, and the party proceeded to camp down for the night. Nothing worthy of record happened during the night to disturb their rest, and at an early hour next morning they set off in the general direction of the Maumee river where Kenton advised that Wayne's troops were being concentrated.

The forest in this region was somewhat different in character than that to which our scouts were accustomed, being composed largely of oak and hickory with an occasional sprinkling of ash and beech, towering a hundred feet in the air and spreading above them a verdant canopy so dense that only an occasional glimpse of the brightly shining sun could be had. There was very little undergrowth, so that long vistas of beautiful landscape opened to their view in every direction, and gave every opportunity for easy and rapid advance in the direction of their destination. Late in the afternoon they came upon unmistakable signs of Indians, and soon made out that a considerable party of the savages was not far ahead of them and traveling in the same direction. They determined to proceed cautiously and after nightfall found no difficulty in locating the camp of the enemy. Perceiving that they were encamped near a large fallen tree, our scouts made a detour and came up behind the log. From this position they were easily able to make out by the light of the enemy's campfire that there were nine warriors in the party. Withdrawing to some distance from the camp of the Indians our four scouts agreed upon a plan of attack. They then returned to their former

position behind the log, there to await the coming of day. Evidently the Indians were in no hurry to reach their destination, for they slept until broad daylight. Finally one of them stirred and sat up, calling to his companions. All sprang to their feet and proceeded Indian fashion to stretch themselves. This was the time agreed upon and, at a low signal from Kenton four rifles cracked at the same instant and four of the swarthy foes fell full length to the ground. Jacob Wetzel had a double barrelled rifle, and before the remaining savages could make a move he laid another dead at their feet. The party being thus reduced to the same number as our scouts, the latter with loud whoops, sprang over the log for a hand to hand encounter. The Indians, thoroughly frightened, darted off in different directions into the forest to escape the fate of their fallen companions, each pursued by one of the scouts. Erelong the four scouts returned to the camp, the two Wetzels and Kenton each bearing a bloody scalp as tokens of victory.

Noting that Albert had no scalp in his possession, Kenton remarked consolingly, "Too bad, Maywood, that one got away. We'll likely have another party of the rascals on our trail now."

"Don't ye never believe it," broke in Lewis Wetzel, as Albert remained silent. "When ye git better acquainted with Master Albert, ye'll know they don't any o' the greasy ripscallions git away from him in a footrace. Depind on't the varmints out thar somewhere's dead enough to suit ye, friend Kenton," he continued. "But Albert's no good whatever at liftin'

their dirty topnots. Jist ye wait a minute, an' I'll show ye I know what I'm talkin' about."

With this Wetzel departed in the direction Albert had taken and soon returned with another reeking trophy.

"Now what do ye say, friend Kenton?" cried Wetzel gleefully, holding up the scalp and pointing to the rent made in it by Albert's tomahawk.

"Sorry I didn't know you better, Albert, and I hope you take no offence. That's a real neat job, I must confess," said Kenton extending his hand cordially; "but I still can't understand why you didn't finish the job."

Albert grasped the outstretched hand and replied modestly, "I just cannot bring myself to it, friend Kenton; the custom seems barbarous to me, and I hope I shall never look upon it otherwise. It originated with the savages themselves, and I should feel myself descending to their level were I to practice it."

"Well," replied Kenton kindly, "I suppose that's the natural way for a white man to feel about it, but maybe you'll get over it by the time you've seen as much savage deviltry as we have. You've never been tied up to a stake, as I have, with a hundred of the howling demons around you ready to start you to roasting, and perhaps you don't know that at this very minute we are within a mile of where our gallant Colonel Crawford was actually burned at the stake by the red demons. But," he continued as he released Albert's hand and turned to the others, "we're losing time. Let's get the rest of these scalps and be on our way."

They fell to work with alacrity, as Albert turned from the hideous spectacle and busied himself in reloading his rifle, which with those of the other scouts rested against the trunk of the fallen tree behind which they had lain during the night. Just as he finished the priming and adjusted the flint he chanced to glance in the direction from which he and Wetzel had just returned and caught a glimpse of an Indian cautiously advancing from tree to tree in their direction. Resting his rifle on the log in front of him he waited for a chance at a shot. From behind a large beech tree fully a hundred yards distant he saw the head of the savage gradually come into view as he prepared for a further advance. Taking careful aim, Albert pulled the trigger, and the Indian, springing into full view, fell face downward at the foot of the tree.

Springing from their bloody work the other scouts seized their rifles and hastily began loading them, Kenton remarking in a low tone, "Well, Master Maywood, it looks like your dislike for scalps has saved one of our carcasses anyway, for that red imp would have plugged one of us sure, if you hadn't seen him.

"What I'm wonderin'," said Lewis Wetzel, "is how many more o' the —— ripscallions are sneakin' 'round to take a crack at us. We'd better lay low awhile, an' then scout around a bit."

To this sentiment all agreed, and, after having lain in perfect silence for more than half an hour, they proceeded at a word from Kenton to slip silently into the surrounding forest for a general reconnoiter of their situation. Returning an hour later they all

agreed that there were no other redskins in the immediate neighborhood.

Leaving Albert and Jacob Wetzel to keep a sharp lookout, Kenton and Lewis Wetzel circled in opposite directions and met at the body of the Indian whom Albert had killed. Returning a few minutes later Wetzel held up another scalp and exclaimed, "Here's his greasy topnot, Master Albert, an' I tell ye, on the honor o' a white gintleman, 't war as purty a shot as I ever looked on. Ye plugged the varmint square a'tween the eyes, an' he never kicked arter he fell."

To this opinion Kenton heartily assented, and then, at his suggestion, preparations were hastily made for resuming their journey. They traveled steadily all that day and the next, when Kenton suggested that as they were now near the place where Wayne's troops were to assemble, and being a few days ahead of the appointed time, they had better advance no farther for a few days. He informed his companions, too, that they were now within a day's journey of some of the most populous and most powerful of the Indian tribes, and that, therefore, the utmost care must be taken to avoid discovery by bands of hunters or spies that would be constantly sent out from their villages to obtain food and information to be used in the impending struggle with the whites under Wayne. They were now on the banks of the Auglaize river, and after several days hiding in the dense thickets along its shores, proceeded northward to its confluence with the Maumee river at which point they found a large force of soldiers under Wayne busily engaged in building a fort which when completed he named Defiance. The four scouts found little diffi-

culty in securing an interview with the General himself, at which Kenton renewed his acquaintance with the General and offered their services as scouts, if they might be able to render any assistance.

General Wayne expressed great satisfaction at the generous offer, and stated that he had immediate and pressing need of scouts of their reputation and discretion to obtain accurate information as to the exact location and numbers of the Indians and the most favorable points for attacking them. Our scouts readily agreed to undertake this hazardous service, and early the next morning set out to the eastward along the southern bank of the Maumee. Both banks of the river were lined with the villages of the savages, and frequent detours were necessary to avoid those in their path. Most of their advance was made between midnight and morning at which times the villages, though quiet, could be readily located by the fading glow of campfires which had been lighted in the early evening according to the unfailing custom of the savages. Remaining throughout each day in positions selected for favorable observation, our scouts were able each evening to obtain by the glow of the brightly burning campfires accurate knowledge of the number of warriors, squaws, and children in each village. Thus they continued to the very mouth of the Maumee, and then, borrowing a convenient boat, crossed to the northern bank of the river. Proceeding in the same manner they made their way back along the northern bank to Fort Defiance.

According to the custom of the Indians when preparing for war, the inhabitants of every village were

devoting most of the hours of daylight to games of skill and warlike sports. Day after day our scouts watched these games, which, in spite of the fact that they knew them to be in preparation for bloody war with the whites, yet were strangely interesting and fascinating. Most of these games and sports being minutely described elsewhere in this story will not be dwelt upon here, but one game, which seemed always to be played for pure enjoyment is worthy of particular notice now. It was the game of Indian football.

This was the only game in which the squaws played on equal terms with the warriors. On equal terms, we say, because the rules of the game gave the squaws certain privileges denied to the warriors and thus balanced the superior skill and strength possessed by the male contestants. The football was made of deerskin with the smooth side out and stuffed with feathers so as to make it light to handle, and was about the size of a man's head. Two stakes, six feet apart, were driven into the ground at each end of the field, the distance between these goals varying with the space available from fifty to one hundred yards. The ball could be advanced by the warriors only by kicking it; they forfeited the game by touching the ball with their hands or with any part of their bodies other than their feet. The squaws, however, were permitted to pick the ball up and run with it, or to throw it as far as they could in the direction of their goal. When a squaw was in possession of the ball the braves had the privilege of catching and shaking her to shake the ball from her possession, or even to throw her to the ground and

roll her roughly upon it for the purpose of dispossessing her of the ball. In all of these efforts, however, the braves dared not touch the ball except with their feet, on penalty of forfeiting the game.

Naturally the fleetest and most active among both braves and squaws were chosen for this game, the number varying, according to the individuals available, from a dozen to a hundred on a side. All being ready for play, the braves arranged themselves on one side, and facing them the squaws, each side intent upon sending the ball between the goal posts of their opponents and upon defending their own goal. With typical Indian formality, a chief, the arbiter of the game, advanced between the two lines to the central point of the field, tossed the ball ten or fifteen feet in the air, and the game was on. Back and forth surged the contending lines, the contestants giving free rein to their emotions in shouts and laughter until the game ended with a goal for the winning side, which was as often the good fortune of the squaws as of the braves. Frequently the game lasted for an hour or more and resolved itself into an endurance contest, the squaws, due to their usual routine of drudgery, suffering no handicap from the prolongation of the violent exercise thus involved.

This seemed to be the favorite game with these northern tribes, and rarely during the time our scouts spent in observation did a day pass without their viewing such a spectacle. They returned to Fort Defiance after twelve days of uninterrupted observation and reported to General Wayne so minutely concerning the number and positions of the savages that he was able to plan the movement of

his troops and select his battle grounds so as to achieve a complete victory at Fallen Timbers on August 20, 1794.

Our scouts did not remain with Wayne's army for this great battle, being untrained in the modes involved in large military movements and preferring to devote their energies to cutting off small parties of the savages on their way to the northwest to join their brethern in the engagement which resulted so disastrously to them. Thus proceeding in a general southeasterly direction they succeeded in collecting many scalps and arrived at the present site of Mount Vernon about the time the battle of Fallen Timbers was fought. Here Kenton and Jacob Wetzel decided to turn eastward to Fort Pitt, now Pittsburgh, while Albert and Lewis Wetzel continued toward the headwaters of Captina Creek hoping, as always, that during their absence some news of the missing Forest Rose might have reached the settlements in that region. During the return journey Simon Kenton had briefly sketched to the others of the party the story of an Indian maiden and her lover which he had heard during his captivity among the Indians. As they were seated around the campfire for the last night together Albert pressed Kenton to give them the promised story in full. He proceeded to relate this strange and beautiful legend.

Long before the coming of the white men into these vast forests the Hurons were a mighty nation, dwelling in many villages situated in the more favorable regions of the territory drained by the beautiful Hock-hocking river. About a mile west of the swamp in which this stream has its origin was located a hill

rising to a considerable height above the surrounding country. Upon the top of this hill was located one of the principal villages of the Hurons. The hill itself was a natural watchtower for the Indians, but this advantage was augmented by the situation upon its very crest of a giant oak tree, known to all savages of this section as the enchanted oak. Aside from its enormous girth and prodigious height, the enchanted oak was not different in appearance from its neighbors of its kind, except in the fact that its topmost bough, shooting straight upward branchless for many feet and spreading out at its very top so as to give the appearance of a tree upon a tree, was evergreen. From the fact of its perpetual verdance, this was known as the Enchanted Bough, which, to one who could mount to its spreading top and seat himself thereon, afforded the power of supernatural vision. Indeed, there was a popular superstition among the Indians, that any brave of pure Huron blood and possessing an ardent affection for a maiden of the tribe, by ascending to the enchanted bough in a certain phase of the moon and at the dead hour of midnight, might look down into the heart of her whom he loved and see if his image were enshrined there, and know whether or not his love were returned.

At the very foot of the enchanted oak was the wigwam of the chief of the village, justly renowned for his valor in war and for the benignancy with which he ruled his people. His only daughter, beautiful as the moonlight, graceful as a faun, gentle as a dove, was the idol of the entire tribe, but particularly of a young brave who had already won marked distinction as a hunter and warrior. At times he felt

that his love was returned, but his hope of winning the fair maiden was dimmed by the knowledge that the chief of a neighboring tribe, but little less renowned than her father, was looked upon with favor by the father at least. Too noble by nature to thrust upon the object of his love an unrequited affection, he bethought him of the test of the enchanted bough. But none might ascend to this coveted station except by express permission of the chief himself, and such permission the lover felt doubtful of obtaining. Concluding at length, however, that life without the fair maiden was not worth the living, he resolved to brave the wrath of discovery in making the attempt. Accordingly the moon having reached the proper phase, he stole quietly to the foot of the enchanted oak and began the long climb which few had ever been able to accomplish. Strange to relate the other suitor for the maiden's hand, feeling doubtful of her love and unwilling to take her as his bride against her will, determined also to put his case to the test of the enchanted bough. Feeling sure of her father's favor to the trial, he made his request in a direct and dignified manner and received not only the good chief's consent but his benison also. Shortly before the hour of midnight, therefore, he proceeded toilsomely but quietly to ascend to the enchanted bough. Slightly underestimating the time required for the long climb, he arrived at the exact moment of midnight at the base of the long stem which united the enchanted bough with the body of the tree. Glancing upward he beheld the form of his rival seated upon the enchanted bough whose effulgence reflected in his face the ec-

stasy of his soul as he beheld his own image in the heart of her whom he adored.

Seized with an insane jealousy, the chief snatched from his belt his ever-ready tomahawk and smote the stem a mighty blow with its keen edge, severing the enchanted bough completely from the tree. He was astonished that there was no sound from the blow, but still more astonished that, instead of falling to the ground and carrying his rival to his death as he had intended, the enchanted bough rose slowly in the air and floated away with the happy lover, all unconscious of his rival's dastardly design. Rising from the branch on which he sat, the chief made a frantic attempt to seize the stem and hurl it to the ground, but missing it, he plunged to his own death at the foot of the tree.

Aroused from slumber by the crash of the falling body, the villagers gathered about the mangled form, but not until morning was it discovered that the enchanted bough was missing from its accustomed place and that the young brave was also missing. Not suspecting his unhappy fate and supposing him to have gone on a hunting expedition, they waited many days for his return. Searching parties were sent out in every direction and the entire region was scoured, but all in vain.

The lovely maiden pined away and died and was buried at the foot of the enchanted oak, which itself withered and decayed and fell to the earth, and by order of the heart-broken chief was burned to ashes. Many moons had passed since then. The chief, bowed with age and sorrow, passed away. The village was moved, and the hill itself avoided by the super-

stitious savages. But to this day, the Hurons say, if one places himself in a favorable place for observation in the proper phase of the moon and at the exact hour of midnight, he may hear a gentle swish-swish of the atmosphere, and, by its effulgence may behold the enchanted bough moving slowly toward its ancient station. In ghostly outline the enchanted oak will rear itself in position as of old, and the enchanted bough, gently descending, will attach itself as of yore. The long lost brave, with shining face, will quickly descend the tree, the lovely maiden, will rise from her grave at its foot, and the two will roam the hilltop together as in the happy days of yore, while a deathly stillness settles over all. But, let the supernatural stillness be broken by the slightest sound, the spectral lovers will spring as in a single stride to the foot of the enchanted oak, the maiden sinking into the earth at its base, while the brave swiftly ascends to his perch upon the enchanted bough. Slowly it rises and moves away; the giant oak fades into nothingness, and the awed observer is left alone in the blackness.

Narrated in the low musical voice for which Simon Kenton was noted, this remarkable Indian legend produced a profound impression upon his companion scouts. For a long time after he ceased speaking they sat in silence, meditating upon the parts played by the actors in this tragedy of the forest. The silence was finally broken by Albert as he gave voice to the thought always uppermost in his mind, "Well, at least the lovers were not left to wander on for years in dread uncertainty, but doubtless their souls were joined and happy in the knowledge of their mutual love."

"Ye make a big mistake thar, Master Albert," broke in Lewis Wetzel, "in thinkin' as them greasy imps has souls any more nor a painter has, an' as fer bein' happy they hain't got no sich right here nor hereafter."

"Friend Wetzel thinks," observed Kenton with a laugh, "that the only good Indian is a dead Indian, and I'm bound to say that I've never seen many that I didn't think the same thing about. But I'm thinking we'd better get some sleep now, if we're going to get an early start in the morning."

To this proposal there was no objection, and soon the camp was quiet except for the deep breathing of those who slept. This did not include Albert, who lay awake for a long time thinking of the lost Forest Rose and of the cruel fate that had snatched her from him. At length he slept, to dream of her, and awoke at dawn to disappointment.

Chapter XII

A FRONTIER STATION

The reader must now suppose some eighteen months to have elapsed since the opening of our story. During this period but little change had been effected in that section of territory which had been the theatre of the events of the preceding chapters. It is true that there had been a strong influx of settlers from the towns and villages further East, but owing to the daring hostility of the Indians, most of these newcomers had repaired to the strongholds of the frontiers, so that, though the body of whites had materially increased in numbers, there was far less change in the face of the country than might naturally be supposed. Frequent depredations of the savages had taught the whites the necessity of keeping as much together as possible, and, consequently though the regularly established military posts and settlements were being every day rendered more secure by a rapid enlargement of population, and though the deep forests surrounding them were gardually made to retreat and show the open lands of civilization, yet, in the main, as we have said, the face of the country was not materially altered, and the red man still had an almost boundless range of cover under which to carry on his barbarous warfare. Nor had he been idle. Almost every day brought intelligence to the fortified posts of the butchery of this or that family, who had

recklessly ventured to locate themselves in some unguarded place, where the necessary succor could not reach them in the hour of danger.

Since the overwhelming defeat of St. Clair, of which slight mention has already been made in these pages, no grand military action of the whites had been undertaken to restore confidence to the latter, and destroy that of the Indians, in the ultimate success of their own resources. It is true that General Wayne, the brave and successful warrior against the Indians, was collecting his forces in the Northwest, preparatory to that signal victory, which was destined to crush the ferocity of the savages, and lead to the celebrated treaty, which afterward left the frontiers many years of peace. But that decisive blow had not yet been struck, and the Indians, in consequence, had every reason to suppose themselves invincible, and that they might yet succeed in driving the white man forever from their hunting grounds and homes.

Rumors now reached a station situated just above the mouth of the Hock-hocking river, on the northern bank of the Ohio, at a place since geographically known as Belpre, that the Wyandotts—a fierce, bloodthirsty, and implacable enemy—were preparing to make a formidable descent upon the frontier inhabitants, and much alarm was the consequence. In order to be fully prepared for the meditated attack, it became absolutely necessary to know the number and design of the foe; and this could only be definitely ascertained by some person or persons secretly venturing into the enemy's country, making an accurate observation, and returning with the all-important information.

But who would go was a question more easily asked than answered; for it was well known to be an adventure of most imminent danger, and the chances were ten to one that whoever set out upon that hazardous exploit would never return to tell the tale. All were brave, and all were ready to risk their lives in defense of their homes, their wives, or sweethearts, their mothers, sisters, or children. But there was something terrible in the thought of thus venturing a hundred miles or more through the wilds of the forest into the very villages of their worst foe, and offering their lives an almost certain sacrifice to their temerity, and dying unknown and alone, with no friends by to see them fall heroically, or avenge their deaths, when their spirits should have ceased longer to act in concert with their mortal tenements. Each turned inquiringly to his neighbor; but there were none among all that brave band of borderers who cared to volunteer his own person on a mission so perilous.

While this matter was under discussion by the garrison of the station referred to, a couple of scouts or hunters were one day discovered by one of the sentinels slowly approaching the fortress. As from this intrepid class of heroes most of the intelligence regarding Indian massacres and the actual condition of the frontiers was at that early day gained by those who kept within the walls of a fortified place, the two newcomers were watched with eager curiosity; and ere they entered the gates, which were at once thrown open to receive them, many speculations were rife as to who they were, and the importance of the

information they would bring to their more secluded white brethern.

As they entered through the gate of the palisade, and passed into the area of the station, a group of both sexes, and all ages, quickly gathered around them. On perceiving the large number of scalps that hung at the belt of one, a simultaneous shout of joy gave them a triumphant welcome, as the intrepid and successful foes of that race which was alike hated and feared by all.

The elder of the two—for they were apparently far from being mated in years, if they were in heroism and otherwise—was a tall, ungainly formed man, with coarse but striking features, whose age might be set down as somewhere between thirty-five and forty. There was little prepossessing in his countenance—though there was an occasional expression of humor and good nature, in strong contrast with a reckless hardihood and ferocity. His eye, too, which was capable of a sinster and malignant expression, now turned kindly upon the group that surrounded him, as though he saw about him only friends, with whom he had no disposition to quarrel. His shoulders were broad and stooping, and indicated great muscular strength; but combined with his long, rather slender legs, gave him an uncomely and rather awkward appearance. Still his step was quick and light, as one who had long been accustomed to the woods, and to following the trail of a sharp-hearing, wily foe. Long exposure to all kinds of weather, and constant sleeping in the open air, had given him a dark, sun-burnt complexion, but little removed from the swarthy Indian, when seen without his paint. In fact, one

unaccustomed to seeing the rude scouts or hunters of the frontiers might readily have mistaken him for a native of the soil, so great was the difference between his appearance and those of his own race who had been nightly housed within the protecting walls of a fortress. This difference was as much the result of his singular dress and habits as the constant exposure already noted.

And of a truth, if one were to judge from his habiliments, it would be hard to decide whether he claimed origin with the red man or white, so singular was the mixture, partaking equally of both races. An old hunting-frock of coarse cloth—so old that it was completely threadbare, and had in several places been patched with untanned skins—covered his shoulders, breast, and a portion of his arms; but the skirts being wanting, a panther-skin, with hair outside, had been fastened around his waist with a wampum belt of ingenious workmanship, and hung down nearly to his knees; the lower edge fringed or tasseled with short strings of different colored beads. It is sufficient to explain this curious mixture of costumes, to state that the coat had at first been the legitimate property of the wearer, but having become old and torn, the panther-skin and wampum belt had been stripped from the body of a chief, that his own hand had slain, and put on as a substitute to the missing skirts, and the other parts had been patched with that kind of stuff that comes most readily to the hands of a woodman. It will be only necessary to add that the rest of his person was covered with coarse leggings, moccasins, and a large wild-cat cap. To his shoulders was strapped a bundle of furs, the result of some industry

in trapping, and which might readily explain his visit to the fort, it being customary for the hunters and trappers to exchange their gatherings in the wilderness for powder, lead, tobacco, and whatever other staple commodities they might desire. In his hand he carried a long beautiful rifle, and in his belt the usual accompaniments of a borderer—a tomahawk and scalping knife.

The companion of this true specimen of frontier production, materially differed from him in personal appearance. He was a young man, apparently some three and twenty, or four and twenty years of age, and taller than the other by several inches, was far more comely in his formation. In fact, he was symmetrical to a high degree of manly beauty, with lithe, well-rounded limbs, full of muscular power and activity, a broad, deep chest, and a carriage erect, commanding and noble. Every movement was one of natural ease and grace that would have made a study for an artist. His face, like his figure, was comely, and one, too, that was remarkably prepossessing. The countenance was open, frank, intelligent to a high degree, and noble in its expression; but there was a serious sternness about the line of his mouth, combined with a deep-seated melancholy—more apparent in the mild, calm blue eye than elsewhere—which was peculiarly calculated to repel any undue attempt at familiarity, and gain for the individual himself the sympathy and respect of all who chanced to meet him. His skin was bronzed by exposure, and his costume, like the other's, was a mixture of the two races; yet none could mistake him for other than he was—a high-souled, well-born, well-bred young man

of the pale-faces—who, if he were a hunter of men, was rather so from powerful circumstances than from any natural inclination he might have for so bloody a calling. To his shoulders there was also strapped a bundle of furs; in his hand was a rifle, in his belt the usual weapons, but dangling therefrom was not a single one of those barbarous trophies which his companion carried, and which had excited such a universal shout of admiration. In fact, the young man seemed to dislike this boisterous display of the morbid passions, for he instantly drew back, and passing through the crowd as it respectfully made way for him, he approached the palisade, and leaned against it, in a mood of melancholy abstraction, leaving his elder companion to amuse the inmates of the station, and explain the object of their own unexpected visit.

"Well, what news?" cried one of the garrison addressing the old hunter, as soon as the first boisterous welcome had died away. "Now I jest know you can tell us about the Injins, for anybody, with half an eye, can see as how you carry the Injin documents," and he pointed to the dangling scalps while the crowd gave another shout of delight.

"Well, yes," replied the hunter, complacently, raising the scalps with his hands for examination, much as a successful angler would a string of fish; "I've bin near enough to some on 'em to let Killnigger ax 'em to stop till I could feel o'thar top-knots."

"Bravo! bravo!—good!—good!—hurrah for the hunter!" were the several exclamations of approval from different members of the group.

"But then they ain't all mine," continued the other,

glancing his eye toward his young companion, who was now being joined by some of the older and more sedate inmates of the station. "For a young man, I must say that my friend is powerful a heap among the inemy—though he's got some queer notions of his'n about scalpin' the red niggers that I can't break him on, no how. He'll kill a varmint without blinkin', but—a bit will he take a top-knot for his trouble, an' so I've saved up his'n an' mine together."

This plain and simple statement of facts created quite a sensation among the persons that heard them, very few of whom could comprehend the refined nature of one bold enough to hunt Indians, and kill them, and yet not take the scalp as a trophy of victory —a matter of as common occurrence among the whites at that day as among the Indians themselves. Many an eye turned curiously toward the young hero, and more than one left the group around the old hunter to go and join that already forming around the other, in order to satisfy by closer inspection, the curiosity which he had thus unconsciously excited.

"If it be a proper question, stranger," said a middle-aged man to the old hunter, "I'd like to ask who you and this young friend of yours are, as both your faces are new to us."

"Well, I hain't no objections to tell," was the reply, "for I don't b'lieve neyther on us hev done anything he oughter be ashamed on. That thar young man is called Albert Maywood. His daddy, Cap'en Maywood fit in the revolution; an' arter the war was over, he fotched his family out here from Varginia, an' settled on a little creek as runs into the Captina, what runs into the Ohio a good piece above here. Well, the

cap'en wan't a good understander o' Injins an' he didn't take no pains to keep his scalp whar it oughter be, an' so one day 'bout a year'n a half ago, he lost it, and his wife and two children along with it. Out o' the hull family o' six, only Albert an' a young gal, as he was agoin' to marry, 'scaped bein' killed. He was out in the woods when it happened, an' the gal was taken captive. I know'd him afore this, as a powerful smart hunter o' animals, an' we happened to come together in the woods, an' I went home with him, whar we seed sights, you may depin! Well, we followed the gal, killed all o'her captors, an' got her cl'ar, as we reckoned, o' the cusses' clutches; but she got took agin', an' that's all we ever know'd about her. Albert got took too, but I managed to get him cl'ar and we went off together, sw'arin' vengeance on every red nigger we mought see; and we hain't broke the contract mor'n a few, and that happened when we got in tight places. We've tramped a heap since then, and bin right through the Injin country, cl'ar to the lakes, and done some little service in the scout line for old Gineral Wayne, who's one o' the tallest Injin fighters I ever sot eyes on."

"And the gal you've never found?" rejoined one.

"Never hev seed a sight on her, nor heard a word consarnin' her, though we've hunted her high and low, in every possible and onpossible place. Ah, me!" sighed the old hunter, "I'd give five years o' my life jest to find her, an' a'most all on Albert's account, for he takes it powerful hard. He don't never say nothin' much, but then he thinks all the time, and groans in his sleep, an' don't never smile like he used to do. Poor feller! I wouldn't wonder ef it 'ud

be the death o' him yit, for it 'pears to me that he gits more melancholler every day."

As Wetzel said this, nearly every eye involuntarily turned in the direction of Albert; and many a sigh of sympathy escaped the group, particularly from the younger and female portion of it, who could the more readily appreciate his loss, and his consequent feelings. In their eyes he was already an object of unusual interest—a hero exalted to the highest standard of natural romance.

"Rumors have reached us," pursued the middle-aged gentleman, who was none other than Colonel Martin, the commander of the garrison;"Rumors have reached us here that the Wyandottes are preparing to make a descent upon the frontier posts; have you any news to confirm the report?"

"Well, I don't know's I've got anything pertikelar on the subject; though I can't say I see anything agin it, for they're a powerful savage set o' varmints, an' ain't a bit too good to do whatsomever's most mean. It was them as killed Albert's family; an' some on 'em had a finger in gittin' his gal away again, or I don't know nothin' 'bout paint."

"Do you know where their villages are located?"

"Reckon I does, for we've scouted all 'round them, in the hope o' findin' the gal."

"You must be an old hand at the business, if we may judge from the fact that you can venture so near the most wary and bloodthirsty foes we have, and yet come off scathless and undiscovered."

"Why," replied the other indifferently, "it's bin a good many years sence I first sot out on the red varmints' trail, I'll allow, an' I'd be mighty weak o'

understandin' not to hev larn't nothin' sence 'bout how to manage the red cusses."

"But you have not told us your name. We perhaps know you by report, if not personally."

"Well's I said afore, ef you want my name, you can hev it. I'm called Lewis Wetzel."

"Lewis Wetzel!" exclaimed a dozen voices in surprise.

"The renowned scout!" added one.

"The celebrated Indian hunter!" cried another.

"The man as the varmints can't never catch!" put in a third.

"You see we know you now," put in the colonel, grasping the hunter's hand. "Your fame has gone before you."

"Three cheers for the brave and gallant Lewis Wetzel!" said another at the top of his voice; and immediately the welkin rang with the united shouts of all who heard him, while those who had withdrawn from the group, on hearing the name, returned to take another view of one so renowned in border history.

Wetzel was completely taken aback with this vociferous greeting. He looked abashed and discomfited. His dark, sun-burnt features flushed a deep red, as if all his blood had rushed to his face, while his eye wandered around the crowd, as if seeking a way to escape from so uncomfortable a situation. But finding himself completely hemmed in, and every eye fixed upon him, he said as if with a desperate attempt at articulation:

"My friends, I s'pose I'm to consider all you've said as meanin' complimentary, an' so I'll put up with

it for onc't; but I gin ye the honor o' a white gintleman I'd rayther hev a hull yellin' tribe o' the cussed red-nigger Wyandottes arter me, nor stand sich another white whoop on account o' my doin's. I'll fight Injins with the best feller amongst ye, but I can't stand to be made a show on."

A simultaneous burst of applause greeted this announcement; and not exactly understanding what was meant, the dark eye of Wetzel kindled ferociously, and his hand involuntarily clutched the handle of his tomahawk. Instantly the crowd drew back in alarm, and the old hunter was on the point of making for the gate, resolved on instant departure, when the colonel touched him on the shoulder, and bade the crowd disperse.

"Come, my worthy friend," he pursued, addressing Wetzel, "you should not take offense when none is meant. These people have so often heard of your daring exploits among the Indians that, on learning who you are, they could not refrain from giving vent to their delight. Of course they did not understand your sensitive modesty, or they would not have done it."

This explanation served to appease the irritated feelings of the simple-minded, modest backwoodsman, and now that he found himself alone with the other, and no longer the lion—or show, as he termed it—of an excited crowd, all traces of anger vanished, and he freely answered all questions asked him, and gave his own views regarding what he thought would most likely be the first movements of the savages. "If we could only be certain of their designs," replied the colonel, "we could then, in a measure, be prepared for

them; but there is no way of ascertaining what they intend, but by sending spies to the villages."

"Well, then, an' why don't ye do that?" inquired the old hunter.

"For the simple reason that we can find no one willing to venture on so hazardous an expedition."

"Why, it's nothin' more'n what I've did more'n onc't, an' I didn't think it no great matter arter all," replied Wetzel, with some surprise.

"But not all are like you, my worthy friend, or there would soon be many famous names upon the borders."

"Well, if it's o' any perticklar account to you, I'd jest as lief do it agin as not," replied the old hunter, in his simple, straight-forward manner.

"It would be an act we should ever hold in grateful remembrance," cried the other joyfully, "and whatever price you may demand for your services, I will obligate myself to see paid."

"I ain't goin' fer hire," rejoined Wetzel. "For whensomever I can sarcumvent the red-skins, I 'spect it does me jest about as much good as it does anybody else. All I want is plenty o' ammunition, jerked venison, an' corn bread, and if I don't have a heap o' fun afore I git back, why then there arn't no snakes, that's all. But I must hev Master Albert go along, sure, fer me and him understand workin' together in the same team to perfection. I've trained him till he can pop into an Injin right center, an' then load his piece while runnin'; though I'll have to allow he can't do it quite so parfect as I can, nor more'n half as fast, but yet he can do it, an' that's something to brag on.

Come, I see as how he's alone agin, and so let's jine him and talk the matter over."

The two speakers approached Albert, who probably owing to his disinclination to talk and answer the thousand and one curious questions of those who pressed around, was now again left to himself. Wetzel immediately opened the conversation, coming at once to the matter under discussion. The Colonel then joined in; stated to Albert the fears of the inhabitants regarding an Indian invasion, and the necessity there was for having correct information on the subject. After describing what he conceived to be the manifold dangers that would attend such as might be brave enough to venture into the Indian country, to act as spies, he concluded by saying:

"But dangerous as it is, your gallant friend here has volunteered to go, but cannot bear the thought of parting company with you. I do not ask you to join him, for well I know the perils of the undertaking; but if you do join him, I can assure you, sire, you will have the prayers of a whole community for your safe return, and will deserve their lasting gratitude, for success in the enterprise may not only confer a benefit upon the present generation, but on those who shall follow. Weigh well the matter ere you decide."

Albert heard him through calmly, without interruption, and without even a change in the expression of his countenance. When he had done, he answered without hesitation:

"Sir, I consider my life in the hands of God, and I am willing to use it in any way to the benefit of my countrymen. I have no home, no kindred, and none of those ties to bind me to earth which others have. I

am free, and willing to serve you in any proper manner. If I can render any services of value to any of my own race, by saving them from the horrors of Indian butchery, believe me, the satisfaction of having done so, will be sufficient reward for all the perils and fatigues I may undergo. Wherever my friend here leads, I will follow."

As he said this, Albert sauntered slowly away, his mild blue eyes fixed, with a gaze of deep melancholy, upon the ground. Selecting a spot as far from every one as possible, he sat down upon a rude bench, and resting his elbows upon his knees, bowed his head upon his hands, and gave way to reflections on the sad and eventful past, and on the gloomy and uncertain future.

There was one thing wanting to cheer his drooping spirits; but alas! that one thing might be wanting forever. Poor Forest Rose, the only being he ever truly loved, or ever could love, was dead to him —ay, worse than dead—for over her fate there hung a veil of mystery, more terrible to a lover's thoughts than death, a hundred fold.

As the young man moved away, Colonel Martin said audibly, "Noble fellow;" and was about to follow him, when Wetzel touched him on the shoulder, and shaking his head significantly, observed:

"It won't do; he wants to be alone a spell. He's of'en that way sence he's given up all hope o' ever findin' his gal, poor feller! But see here! I've fergot all about tradin' off these here furs," and Wetzel unslung the pack from his shoulders, and proceeded to display its contents to the colonel, with all the eager

interest a peddler would have in showing his wares preparatory to a sale of great importance.

It is enough to say that the furs were purchased at five times their value and those of Albert also, the colonel taking this mode to force upon them many an article of more or less importance, that they would certainly have refused had it come to them in the shape of a gift. Among other things, before quitting the fort on their perilous enterprise, both Lewis and Albert were fitted to entire new hunting suits in the fashion of the day, which altered their appearance much for the better.

On learning that these two hunters had nobly volunteered to go on a mission of so much danger to themselves, and importance to the inhabitants of the frontier—and in which they alone could have no interest, aside from doing a noble and courageous act —an undertaking withal, from which even the boldest among themselves had shrunk with something akin to fear—the most enthusiastic feeling of respect and admiration prevailed among both sexes of the garrison. It was only with the greatest exercise of his authority and influence, that Colonel Martin could suppress those uproarious manifestations of the popular feeling, which he knew would be so offensive to his sensitive guests.

Albert and his companion remained at the fort over night, and on the following morning took their departure, amid unrestrained cheers, and the roar of musketry, fired by the garrison in honor of their patriotic bravery. When our scouts reached the last point from which their forms could be visible to the

friends who were watching their departure, they turned and discharged their rifles in the air; and ere the answering shout had died away in echo, they were lost to view in the depths of the great forest.

Chapter XIII

WETZEL

For two or three miles the two scouts trudged along in silence, each apparently wrapped in contemplations of the toilsome and hazardous journey before them. Well they knew that it would take them into the very heart of the Indian country, involving perils and privations such as even they had never yet experienced. Pausing at length on the top of a high hill from which a lengthened prospect of the country which they were to traverse appeared, they stood in silent awe and admiration of the scene. Stretching as far as the eye could see was an unbroken expanse of forest, rising and falling with the undulations of the ground. The frosts of early autumn had touched the leaves and transformed them into the various hues of nature's variegated handiwork. The majestic river shimmering in the rays of the morning sun, swept upon their left southward at either extremity, forming almost a semi-circle and then straightening away to the north-east and to the south-west in placid beauty.

"Truly a marvelous country," ventured Albert at length to his silent companion," and destined to be the home of a mighty civilization, when these great forests are cleared."

"That all depinds," returned Wetzel, "on first clearin' it o' the red varmints as infest it. An'," he

continued, "if I could stand right here and train old Killnigger on the last one o' thar greasy carcasses, I'd be willin' for my bones to bleach on this blessed spot; on the honor o' a white gintleman, I tell ye."

Many times in their wanderings had Wetzel given vent to expressions similar in their purport to that just uttered, and Albert had often been on the verge of questioning him as to the cause of his implacable hatred and his unrelenting pursuit of the red men, but had as often refrained. Now, he resolved to put his impulse into words.

"My friend," he began, "I have often wondered at your deep-seated hatred of the Indians, and that you never seem so happy as when you have sent one of them to his eternal reward. Tell me, pray, whence comes this passion for slaughter, which to me seems unnatural to your normal disposition."

"Etarnal is right, Master Albert," replied his companion, "but as to reward, you're all wrong. To think that thar's any reward fer any o' them greasy varmints arter I've lifted thar dirty scalps, is beyond natur with me. But let's set down on this here log, an' I'll tell ye my story, an' then leave ye to judge fer yerself if it's unnateral, as ye say."

They seated themselves upon the log, with their rifles across their knees, and, after some deliberation, Wetzel began.

"When I war only five years old, my father, John Wetzel, moved his family from Pennsylvania and settled on Big Wheeling Creek in the west part of Virginia, forteen miles from whar it joins the Ohio. Thar war nary another family in all that country then, fer father'd figgered thet by gittin' in early

he'd git his pick o' the land. He did, an' a purtier stretch o' land ye wouldn't want to see. I was jist a thinkin' while we stood here lookin' ahead that this country war a lot like that, except ye couldn't see the big river like ye kin here. Father cleared out a little space an' built a cabin, though it warn't much to brag on. But we settled down an' called it home, an' things went along peaceful enough for quite a spell.

"Thar war five o' us boys; Martin, older'n me by two years, Jacob, the next younger, then John an' George; an' two girls, Susan and Christina. We didn't hev much to live on, way off thar in the wilderness, but mother always managed somehow to keep us fed. We hed brought with us a team o' horses an' a cow. The cow warn't much for looks, but she give a lot o' milk, an' that helped a lot. Martin an' me soon larned to hunt an' trap, an' a good part o' the time we didn't lack fer meat. The skins made our clothes, tho' mother'd weave cloth fer the girls an' herself. The weather in winter war purty cold, but in summer it got blisterin' hot, an' the black woods flies would pester the horses 'till they set 'em plum' crazy. They'd break away an' make fer the high ground acrost the river every chanst they got, an' father'd hev to go arter 'em, an' fetch 'em back. Often he'd be gone fer days, an' mother'd be left alone with us children. Thar bein' only one rifle, an' father havin' that with him, mother wouldn't let us git fur from the house while he war gone. But the old cow warn't so easy to handle. She'd wander away through the forest fer a mile or more, an' mother'd have to go arter her in the mornin'. Before she'd start, she'd tie the little children in bed, so nothin'd happen to

'em, and tell us older ones to stay in the cabin 'till she got back. When she did come she'd be wet to the waist from the dew on the undergrowth o' the forest.

"When Martin an' me got to be eight an' ten years old, we'd slip out in the woods durin' the day an' practice milkin' the cow, 'till we got so we could do it proper, an' arter that we done it reg'lar. Mother'd always caution us about Injins, but father'd say thar war no danger, seein' as they'd all been drove out an' hadn't bin seen aroun' thar fer a long time. He didn't know the red imps o' —— as well as I know 'em now, or he'd a knowed they war jist waitin' 'till nobody'd be lookin' fer 'em an' then git in thar infernal work, jist as they did with your folks not s'long ago. One evenin' when I war thirteen years old, Martin an' me went to milk the ol' cow as usual. She'd gone a lot furder that day then ordinary, an' we hunted fer some time afore we located her. The place where we found her bein' kind o' new to us, I war lookin' around some while Martin war a milkin'. I always had purty sharp eyes fer anything movin' in the woods, an' afore long I spied somethin' about two hundred yards away movin' from tree to tree. I called Martin, an' we watched sharp an' soon made out it war a painted ripscallion o' an Injin. We war'nt long in takin' to our heels, an' he made his indivors to overhaul us. When he saw we war goin' to make our clearin' he turned tail an' scooted off into the woods towards the river. When we got home we told about the chase we'd had, an' mother turned pale as a ghost while she listened to us. Father said it warn't nothin' to git scared at, cause, if we hadn't

run away from him, we'd likely found he war a friendly Injin comin' or goin' to the settlements up the river. We kept purty clost that night, but didn't see nor hear nothin' furder. Next mornin' me an' my brother Jacob, two years younger'n me, war standin' in front o' our cabin talkin' about Injins when I saw one o' the greasy imps o' Satan stick his head out from behind our corn crib. I yelled and jumped back but not quite quick enough to dodge the bullet the —— red nigger sent at me. It ripped clean acrost my breast, an' here's the mark yit, Master Albert," said Wetzel bitterly, as he parted his garments to display a deeply seared scar running the full width of his broad chest.

"The villain" ejaculated Albert, "to thus fire without warning on a defenseless boy."

"Warnin', Albert," repeated his companion, his black eyes blazing, "don't ye never look for no warnin' from none o' them —— ripscallions. They hain't built that way, I'm a tellin' ye, on the honor o' a white gintleman. When ye sees one o' 'em, duck suddint an' stay down, or your carcass hain't worth a thimbleful o' powder."

"Wal," he resumed after a pause, during which Albert offered no further remark, "it knocked me plumb off my feet, ye better believe; an' afore I could git on 'em agin two o' the greasy red niggers darted out an' grabbed me an' Jacob, an' carried us off into the forest. The blood was runnin' down all over my body an' onto the painted devil carryin' me, so he soon set me on my feet, pulled out his tomahawk, an' motioned for me to run alongside o' him, or he'd use it on my topknot. I didn't need no furder argu-

ment, an' put forth my best indivors to keep up with him.

"They made straight fer the Ohio River an' swam acrost it, pushin' me an' Jacob on a log atween 'em. They kep on travelin' fast all that day, stoppin' only long enough to eat a little jerk and givin' us some to eat too. When night come we war twenty miles or more from our cabin an' stopped to camp till mornin'. The Injins built a fire, but afore it war fairly burnin', me an' Jacob dropped down on the ground an' fell off to sleep. I war considable restless from the pain in my breast, an' ev'ry time I'd move, the Injins'd raise up and threaten to brain me with their tomahawks. My throat was parched, my lips swelled to twice their nateral size, an' evry bone in my body ached, but I war so wore out that I slep in spite o' it all.

"At daylight we started on towards the northwest. I bathed my face at a cold spring, took a good drink, an' managed to git down some o' the jerk the greasy varmints give me. Jacob was rested from a good sleep, an' we managed to git along better then the day before. My clothes stuck to my breast an' give me a lot o' pain, but I gritted my teeth an' kep goin'. We made thirty miles that day an' camped at night on McMahon's Creek.

"I'd been thinkin' all day about gittin' away from the cussed critters, an' hed it all figgered out by the time we stopped to camp. While they built a fire, I laid down an' Jacob alongside me as the night afore. Jacob dropped right off to sleep but I only pretended I war asleep too. The Injins eat some jerk an' soon stretched out near the fire. They'd lost a lot o' sleep the night afore, cause I'd kep wakin' 'em up so

much, so they soon went purty sound asleep, fer Injins. I kep real quiet so's not to disturb 'em, an' when I judged the right time'd come I waked Jacob right easy an' made him understand by signs that he should foller me. We took plenty o' time to git on our feet, so's not to make any noise, an' then slipped away without a sound into the dark forest. We war barefooted an' hadn't gone very fur when I made up my mind we couldn't travel that way all the way home, so I told Jacob to wait where he war an' I'd go back an' steal the Injin's moccasins that they'd set by the fire to dry. I didn't have no trouble to do this, an' soon got back with 'em, an' we put 'em on.

"Then I thought we wouldn't have no way to git food without rifles, so I told Jacob I'd go back agin an' git the Injins' guns. I hed to be keerful, ye better believe, fer they had thar guns clost beside 'em, but I finally got the guns, an' ammunition too, an' slipped away with 'em. I stood a good while jist outside the firelight, figgerin' if I could fire both guns quick enough to kill both o' 'em, but made up my mind it war too risky an' left 'em sleep on.

"Jacob an' me made tracks as fast as we could in the dark woods and got a purty good start by daylight. We knowed the Injins'd foller soon's they missed us so kep a sharp lookout to the rear as we went along. By good luck we saw 'em comin' afore they saw us, so we slipped into a thick patch o' hazel and they went by without seein' us. We let 'em git a piece ahead an' then fell in their tracks an' follered 'em. When they turned back towards us, we slipped into another thicket an' let 'em go by agin. Late in the afternoon we saw one o' 'em comin' behind us on a

horse. We hid an' let him go by, an' done the same when he turned back about sundown. We didn't dare fire at any game, though we saw plenty o' it during the day. We didn't dare to build a fire at night neither, an' we war afraid o' wild animals ef we slep on the ground without it, so we clim' a tree an' found a couple o' forks where we could sleep without fallin' out.

"Next mornin' at daylight we started on an' soon come to the Ohio River where we had crossed with the Injins. We figgered they mought be watchin' fer us here, so went up the river two or three miles. We tied some logs together with grape vines, an' with sharp stones cut some long poles to push with. We got acrost all right an' then made a bee line for our clearin'. It war near sundown when we got to it, an' we war so tired out we could hardly crawl. When we got to whar the cabin hed been we found nothin' but a pile o' ashes. Bein' only youngsters an' purty well tuckered out by travelin' an' most starved, an' concludin' that all the rest o' the family had been murdered by the hellish red niggers we set down an' begin to cry. Purty soon we heard somebody holler at the edge of the clearin' toward the fort, an' saw our brother Martin motionin' us to come that way. When we got to him he told us that when we had been carried off by the Injins, an' father bein' away at the time lookin' fer the horses, mother took all the rest o' the family an' hurried to the fort. It war well that she did, because when soldiers from the fort, with Martin fer a guide, war sent to drive away any lurking savages, they found our house an' all the

other buildin's in flames, an' father dead an' scalped not far away.

"Right then an' thar we all held up our right hands an' swore that as long as we lived we'd kill every cussed red imp o' Satan that crossed our paths; that we'd hunt 'em in thar own country an' never quit till we'd got a scalp for every hair on our father's head. None of us has ever fergot that oath, an' though I haven't seen Martin an' Jacob for quite a spell now, I know, ef they're livin', they're on the trail o' some o' the —— imps this mornin'. You know how I stick to the job, an' they know it, too."

"I certainly do know," responded Albert, "and I understand now why you never leave an Indian's scalp on when you have a chance to raise it. But I cannot see why I do not feel the same way when I have suffered even greater losses than you, my friend, at the hands of the redskins."

"But I've only fairly commenced my story," returned the other, his face hardening and his eyes blazing with suppressed feeling. "Wait 'till ye've heard it all, an' then tell me ef thar's no difference."

Albert ventured no reply and presently Wetzel continued.

"We never had a home after that. Mother staid at the fort with the younger children an' we older ones soon took to the forest. Martin got captured by the red niggers, an' for a long time we thought he war dead. But he finally got away from them, an' brought back two scalps to prove he hadn't fergot his oath. He'd lived with the ripscallions long enough to larn thar ways an' a lot about the country they lived in. He could talk thar lingo like a native, an'

could dress up so's ye couldn't tell him from the real thing. All o' these things an' a lot more he taught me an' Jacob, an' we put 'em to good use in trackin' the sneakin' cusses an' liftin' thar hair.

"When I war eighteen I joined an expedition into the Injin country under Col. Crawford. We went ahead too fast, and didn't scout fur enough ahead, an' soon hed the red niggers around us thicker'n hornets. Crawford ordered us to scatter an' make our way back fer ourselves. A lot o' them never got back, an' among them Crawford himself. He war captured, carried fur into the Injin country, an' finally war burned at the stake.

"Me'n a feller named Mills got away together an' made the settlements with our hair on, but Mills lost a horse an' insisted on goin' back arter it. I went with him, an' arter a long tramp we saw the horse hitched to a sapling near a spring. I knowed the dirty cusses was hid to trap us, but Mills wouldn't listen to me. He hardly got out in the open 'till the greasy skunks opened fire, an' a bullet hit him in the heel. They soon overtook him and took his scalp, an' then four o' the dirty cusses took after me. I led 'em a lively race through the underbrush, an' when I got a good chanst I plugged the head one. The others thought they hed me sure then an' come on with murderous whoops. But I'd practiced the trick o' loadin' as I run, an' so soon dropped another one o' the —— varmints. The other two couldn't take the hint yit, an' come on after me yellin' like demons. I got loaded agin an' peppered the third one. The fourth then took to his heels an' got away afore I could load. I lingered around the neighborhood till

mornin' an' then slipped back and lifted the topknots o' the three red niggers I'd shot, an' got home the next day with the three scalps to show fer my trouble. Some time arter that I joined a small party to go into the Injin country arter some o' the varmints that hed bin raidin' the white settlements on the river. Arter a few days' tramp we diskivered signs o' Injins but the party feared they war too many o' 'em for us to tackle an' voted to go back to the settlements. I couldn't see any good reason fer this an' told 'em I'd come after a scalp an' was goin' to git it afore I went back. They left an' I lingered aroun' till the next day. I got the scalp all right, but it turned out that General Harmar had been tryin' to make a treaty with the red ripscallions an' figgered I'd busted up the arrangements "murderin'," as he called it, one o' the —— critters. I war stayin' with some friends at Mingo Bottom when we heard that Harmar war sendin' Major Kingsbury with a party o' soldiers to arrest me. My friends war for ambushin' the party, but I argued with 'em till they agreed to send word to Kingsbury that it wouldn't be healthy fer him an' his party to try to take me. I made up my mind to git out o' thet country an' started fer Kentucky. On the way I stopped at an island near Fort Harmar an' a party o' soldiers sent by General Harmar surrounded the cabin where I war, busted in the door an' took me prisoner. They put iron handcuffs on my wrists an' loaded me down with heavy irons, took me to Fort Harmar an' throwed me into a dirty, dark hole of a prison. Arter a few days of this vile treatment, I decided I'd rather die than live like this, an' I sent fer General Harmar.

I tried to convince him that there couldn't possibly be any harm in killin' off the —— red niggers instead o' settin' down an' waitin' to git killed by 'em, but he couldn't see it, an' insisted it war murder an' I should be tried an' punished fer my crime. I finally asked him to take off my irons, give me over to the red imps o' Satan that hung about the fort, provide me with a tomahawk, an' let me fight it out with as many o' the red niggers as he wanted to put around me. He refused to do this, but did order the irons to be knocked off o' my legs. They war so stiff I could hardly stand up, so I asked him to let me exercise a little outside o' the fort. He allowed me to do this, so I jumped an' frisked about like a colt, running a little ways an' then, turnin' back toward the soldiers an' Injins as war guardin' me an' enjoyin' my antics. Every time I'd run a little furder before turnin' back, an' when I got limbered up good, I jist kep on runnin, an' got a good distance away afore the soldiers knowed I war gittin' away from 'em. They started after me, firin' and yellin' fer me to stop, but I only run faster, duckin' an' zigzaggin' to dodge the bullets, an' got into the woods. The heavy iron handcuffs bothered me a lot, but I made my best indivors an' got a good piece ahead. I knowed I couldn't git clean away on a straight run with a lot o' greasy red varmints on my trail, so looked fer a good place to hide. I found a log with room to crawl under it, an' hazel growin' thick on both sides o' it. I jist hed time to git my wind when I heard 'em comin', an' purty soon two painted ripscallions crawled up on the log right above me. I could o' touched their toes, but that warn't my

intintions, an' I laid low an' breathed soft as a baby. By an' by they jumped down an' started on. All afternoon I could hear soldiers an' Injins combin' the woods but I kep hid 'til dark an' they give up the chase.

"I staid under the log 'til near mornin', an' then slipped away in the direction o' the Ohio. I got there jist at daybreak, but, with the heavy handcuffs on, I couldn't build a raft, an' I war afraid to try swimmin', fer I war purty weak. By an' by I saw a man fishin' tother side o' the river, an' soon made out it war Isaac Wiseman, an old friend o' mine. I didn't dare to holler or make much noise for fear some Injin er some one from the fort might be near, but, by splashin' in the water I finally got Isaac to look acrost. I made signs to him an' he recognized me an' rowed over an' took me in. On the other side war plenty o' friends, an' a blacksmith soon filed the handcuffs off.

"Soon arter this I went down the river an' crossed over into Kentucky. Harmar had moved his headquarters to Fort Washington, an' offered a reward fer my arrest. I war stayin' with friends in Maysville, Kentucky, an' war arrested thar by Lieutenant Lawler an' a band o' Harmar's soldiers, taken to Fort Washington, an' again throwed into irons to wait trial. The backwoodsmen arganized to take me away from Harmar by force, but Judge Foster got me released on a writ of habeas corpus. I made up my mind they wouldn't git me agin, so put off into the forest whar I hev lived ever since, an' you, Master Albert, are the only white man I've hitched up with in all these years. I took to you

because you had lost all o' your family at the hands o' the same imps o' Satan as I had."

Wetzel ceased speaking and sat with his hands folded across his trusty rifle. His gaze was fixed on the distant hills and his thoughts were apparently traveling beyond them to the scenes of which he had been speaking. Out of respect for his feelings Albert remained silent for a long time also, his own mind dwelling upon the striking similarity of their fortunes. Only one point of difference appeared to his mind, and that, of course, involved Forest Rose, now so long absent from his sight that he had given up all hope of ever seeing her alive again. At length he put his thoughts into words.

"Friend Wetzel," he began, "our fortunes have indeed been strangely and sadly alike. But one point of difference occurs to my mind, and this is the hardest circumstance for me to bear. You witnessed my grief at the discovery of all of my family murdered by the cruel redskins, and you witnessed, also, my joy at the rescue of her whom they had carried off a captive. But you cannot know the depths of my agony when she was again snatched from us by the savages. You cannot know the slow torture I have experienced as the months and years have dragged on and the hope of ever seeing my sweet Forest Rose again in this world has slowly and surely departed."

"Not so fast, Master Albert," broke in Wetzel fiercely, "an' you'll see as I kin understand even that. I'm now goin' to tell ye what no mortal ear has ever heard, nor ever will hear agin. It war perhaps a year after I'd took to the woods all by myself that

I hit the trail one day of a couple o' greasy varmints an' follered 'em all day. At night I sighted their camp an' crawled up so's I could see into it. I diskivered two o' the red ripscallions stretched out by the fire, an' a little piece away all bound up tight a captive—a woman. I couldn't see her face, but I could hear her moanin' like a wounded dove. I didn't know Injin ways then as well as I know 'em now, an' I couldn't stand it to hear her takin' on so. I took my huntin' knife in one hand an' my tomahawk in t'other an' started to crawl up to the —— imps. Thar camp war pitched on the bank of a creek, an' as I crawled I loosened a stone that rolled down the bank an' plumped into the water. The Injins jumped to thar feet, but I war on mine, too, an' sunk my tomahawk into the head o' the nearest one, an' leaped fer t'other with my knife, but he let out a yell an' darted away into the forest. I let him go an' jumped to the side o' the woman. She war settin' up, an' turned her eyes on me with the look o' a wounded faun, as if she expected to be killed too. I didn't take time to set her free, but cut the thongs that tied her to a saplin' an' picked her up bodily in my arms an' jumped with her fer the dark shadows jist as a rifle cracked from the opposite direction. I felt her body shiver an' her head fell on my shoulder, but I kep on goin' as fast as I could fer a long time. I come to a small stream an' laid her down on the bank as easy as I could. I cut the thongs from her hands an' feet an' then brought water from the stream in my cap an' bathed her face. She didn't come to, but she war breathin' easier, an' I picked her up an' traveled on. All night I carried her, fearin' that

the red imp o' Satan would be follerin', but when daybreak come I couldn't make out to see anyone anywhere.

"I knowed the country well an' made fer a small cave where I'd often staid, follerin' the bed o' the stream to hide my trail. I got thar about noon an' carried her in, still unconscious. I got more water an' bathed her face, but still she slep on, pale an' beautiful in the light o' my grease lamp as any white lily ye ever seen. All that day an' night I staid by her but she never moved nor made a sound. About the middle o' the next forenoon as I war settin' by her an' holdin' her wrist to count the heart beats, she opened her eyes an' looked at me. Ef I live a hundred years longer, I'll never fergit that look. It told me she wanted to say sumthin', but couldn't. It set my heart apoundin' an' my fingers tremblin'. I tried to speak to her but the words stuck in my throat, an' I could hardly breathe. What I wanted to say must a showed in my eyes, an', though our bodies didn't move, our spirits drawed together an' left no need o' words. It might o' bin minutes, or days, or months our spirits stayed together like that, 'till I felt her beginnin' to slip away from me. I tried with all my might to hold her, but it war no use. I could see her spirit leave the cave and tried to foller, but it war like I war loaded down with tons o' iron an' couldn't move a finger.

"When I come to myself the wrist I held war cold, an' the eyes still turned on me war glazed an' lifeless. As I set there an' looked at her so cold an' still I felt I jist wanted to lay down beside her an' never move agin. I must o' started to do it an' my hand

fell on ol' Killnigger layin' thar on the floor o' the cave aside me. Then I went plum crazy to go out an' never stop 'till I brought back to her the scalp o' the —— red devil that had taken her from me. I crawled to the mouth o' the cave, an' thar he war, not twenty rods away, pickin' up my trail as he come toward me. I took good aim at his rascally heart, an' he never moved arter he fell. I tore the scalp from his head, an' carried it back to the cave. When I saw her agin I determined to bury her there in the cave an' never to stop 'till I'd kivered her grave with the scalps o' the fiends that had brought me all the trouble I'd ever had.

I dug her grave with the Injin's scalpin' knife an' tomahawk, an' when I had kivered her with earth I put his scalp in the middle o' it. Every scalp I've taken sence that minit I've carried to that mound o' dirt till it's kivered from one end to t'other with 'em. Some day, Albert, ef we git back from this undertakin', I'll take ye to that spot, an' ef ye're with me when I pass out, I want ye to take my mortal body there an' bury it aside o' her. That's my story, an' now it's likely ye'll understand all that's been a mystery to ye afore, an' not call it unnateral fer me to hate the —— cusses with every breath I draw."

For a long time after Wetzel ceased speaking Albert could find no words to address him. Truly his own sorrows seemed light in comparison with the agonies of spirit that had been endured by this uncouth being who had been exiled by fate and whose soul cried out for a vengeance that never could be satisfied. In every lineament of the rough features of this faithful companion he could now see the

markings of the terrible experiences through which he had passed from childhood to the present hour. He could understand now the relentless hatred of this man toward all the race that had caused him nothing but sorrow. He understood now what had become of all the scalps he had seen him tear in fiendish delight from the reeking heads of his victims.

"I do understand now, Wetzel," he said at last in a voice full of sympathy. "Everything that has seemed mysterious in your attitudes and actions, and never again will I offer protest, even in thought, to anything you may do toward this hated race. The only wonder to me is that when you come upon any of them in the forest you can restrain yourself in such patience until a favorable moment. I should be impelled to rush upon them wherever I found them, had I suffered as you have at their hands."

"Practice, agin, Master Albert, all practice," returned Wetzel. "I made some mistakes like that at first myself an' had some mighty narrer escapes fer 'em. They're oncommon cunnin' critters, these redskins, an' ye got to larn to play thar own game an' beat 'em at it, ef ye want to keep your hair on. Ye're not so keerless now yourself as ye war when ye put a perfectly good bullet through this here ol' wildcat skin o' mine, nigh two years ago now."

"And that reminds me," broke in Albert, "that I've often been tempted to ask you why you never will wear anything else on your head but that tall wildcat skin."

"Wal, ye see," replied Wetzel with a quiet chuckle, "I haint near as tall as I look when I got this on, an'

it's a real fooler fer the greasy varmints. Ye know, an Injin always shoots fer the head the first shot, an' ef ye'll look real clost, ye'll see a lot more holes through this ol' headpiece than ye put through it. It kinder queers the red imps when they think they've plugged me through the dome an' I don't fall down dead an' wait fer 'em to raise my hair. An' mebbe ye've noticed too that I'm kinder stooped in the shoulders an' carry my head purty much forerd. All practice agin, Albert, fer this brings the ol' headpiece out in front o' me all the time when I'm travelin' and draws the fire o' the ripscallions afore they reely see me an' makes 'em waste a lot o' good lead besides givin' me a friendly warnin' to duck fer kiver an' git ready fer action."

"Yes, I see how that works," rejoined Albert with a laugh. "I've often felt a lot too tall when a rifle cracked suddenly, but I fear no amount of practice would ever give me the sense of security you always seem to have at such times. But come, friend Wetzel, do you not think it time we were resuming our journey? The sun is almost directly overhead."

"I do," responded his companion, and with characteristic promptness he rose from the log and set off into the forest, leaving Albert to follow in the accustomed order of their traveling.

Chapter XIV

THE STANDING STONE

It was on one of the balmiest days of the Indian summer of the autumn of the second year succeeding the opening of our story, that two hunters, well equipped with rifles, tomahawks, knives, and knapsacks, turned aside from the waters of the Hockhocking, at a point far up toward its source, and entered a dense thicket of hazel and plum bushes, which covered the angle of a prairie between them and an isolated, picturesque hill, toward which their steps were directed. Both moved with great caution, for well they knew themselves to be in the very heart of the country of a dangerous foe. Neither spoke, but carefully parting the bushes with their hands, they glided stealthily forward, occasionally halting to listen if they could detect any sounds betokening danger. A distance of some three hundred yards from where they entered the thicket brought them to the foot of the hill already mentioned, and emerging from the cover of the plain, they began their ascent of its eastern acclivity.

This hill, being rather singular in its appearance and formation, deserves a passing notice. It is the belief of some geologists, that the precise section of country to which we are now directing the reader's attention, was at one period of the earth's history, the bed of an ocean, or sea, or lake; and that among

others, the eminence in question rose above the waters, forming an island. Be this as it may, it certainly presents an appearance calculated to give rise to more or less speculation. Detached from all other hills, it stands on what was, at the period of which we write, the borders of a large and beautiful prairie, which stretched away to the westward before it for many and many a mile, covered with a soft, luxuriant greensward, and variegated with thousands of beautiful flowers. At a short distance, this elevation resembles a pyramid, its base being some mile and a half in circumference, and its highest point, or apex, not more than a hundred yards in length, by thirty in breadth. Its northern, southern, and eastern sides are full of deep gullies or ravines, and slope off gradually from the apex to the base; but its western side rises some two hundred feet, almost abruptly above the plain, presenting a mural surface of sandstone rocks, some of which stand perpendicular, like huge columns of ancient cities, and others rest horizontally on their summits, leaving deep fissures or cavities in every direction.

Once you reach the summit of these rocks, which have very properly been termed the backbone of the mount, you have a commanding view of the plain below; but their summit can be gained only in one direction, and that over a space so narrow that two persons cannot go abreast. From its peculiar formation and appearance, the Indians, in their simple minded and accurate manner of bestowing names, called this eminence the Standing Stone*—an appel-

*Note: This hill or mountain is now known as Mt. Pleasant, and stands at the northern edge of what is now the city of Lancaster, the thriving county seat of Fairfield County. It overlooks the Fairfield County fairgrounds and is included in what is now known as Rising Park.

lation which the reader will readily perceive carries with it a forcible idea of its general aspect. The whites, discarding the Indian name, have termed it Mount Pleasant; both appellations have a significant meaning, and together illustrate the different manner with which it has been regarded by the two races at different periods—the one naming it solely with the idea of describing the hill itself—the other with the idea of describing the pleasure derived from the view afforded from its summit at the present day.

Great changes have taken place in the aspect of the surrounding country since the period of which we are writing. Whoever stands there now, and casts his eyes abroad, beholds a beautiful plain stretching away before him divided into lots by fences, with here and there a neat farm house dotting the level surface, till his gaze rests upon a cluster of buildings, with numerous church steeples rising above them, and the whole forming one of the most delightful of the inland towns of the State of Ohio. But as it is of its early appearance, and what took place in its vicinity, that our story has particularly to do, we will return at once to the scouts, whom we left slowly and carefully ascending its eastern acclivity.

For some time nothing occurred to interrupt their progress or give them any occasion for alarm. From its base they had gained a position halfway to its summit, and, looking out from among the trees and undergrowth, they had a fine view of the plain away to the left, while to the right, the vision was cut off by several smaller hills, which each being detached as it were from the others, formed quite a chain in

that direction, the end of which they could not see. They had now come to a point where the roll or seams of the hill required them to descend into a kind of trough, and then ascend a steeper portion of the mount, through a ravine, the sides or banks of which were covered with a growth of shrubs, that, overhanging the center, interlocked their branches, and rendered the bed of it so dark that anyone ascending in it would be entirely concealed from the view of anyone above, either directly in front or on either side.

Descending into this trough, and entering the ravine with the same caution which had thus far marked all their movements, our friends were just on the point of pushing forward with more celerity than usual, when the foremost suddenly came to a halt, and raising his hand, in token of silence to his companion, he bent his head a little more forward than nature or habit had placed it, and listened. The other listened also, but although he was what might be considered quick of hearing, he by no means possessed the faculty of distinguishing sounds which characterized his elder and more experienced companion. After the lapse of some thirty seconds, he raised his foot to again move forward, believing there was no cause for apprehension—when, quick as lightning, the other made an admonitory gesture, and said, in a whisper:

"Take car', Master Albert—take car'—thar's danger about, you may depind."

"What is it?" demanded the other, in the same guarded manner.

"Don't know for sartin—but it's my opine thar's

Injins up here. Now mind, it won't do to fire on no account. They're comin' this way, I think, an' ef they pass on ayther side we'll hev to let 'em go. But ef they come down through this here ravine, we must fix ourselves so as we can let 'em hev a few inches o' cold steel, without makin' no more noise nor possible. Ef they should yell, we'll hev the whole tribe at our heels, sartin; but we must do our best, and run the risk. See! Here's a little op'nin' in the hills, where a rock has rolled down into the gully. Before it the bushes an' leaves hang so thick that the cusses mought go right by, it may be, and not see us. Let's crawl in thar an' try it anyhow. Hope they won't find our trail, the varmints, or we'll be in a powerful ugly fix, sartin."

As the old hunter said this in an almost inaudible whisper, both he and his companion moved cautiously forward to the place designated, and crept into the cavity formed by the displacement of a huge rock by the rain. It was large enough to contain both, and allow the thick bushes that grew above and below, to be brought together with their hands, so as to entirely conceal their persons. As soon as both were fairly well settled in their novel hiding place, Albert turned to his companion, and said in a whisper:

"Are you sure, Wetzel, you have cause for all this precaution? I assure you, though I have strained my sense of hearing to the utmost, no sounds have reached my ears that I should ever take to be those of an enemy."

"Hist!" returned the other. "Hark! What d'ye think o' that, eh?"

"You are right," rejoined Albert, as, at the

moment, a low, guttural sound, as of one Indian speaking to another, reached his ears.

Wetzel now made a sign that it would be imprudent to venture another remark, even in a whisper, and consequently each remained silent, with the senses of hearing and seeing both actively exerted to learn the progress of events. Several times that same low, guttural sound reached the ears of our friends, after short intervals, and each time it was more distinct, showing that the speaker and his companion were every moment drawing nearer the ambuscade of our friends.

Directly a rustling of the bushes was heard, and, on the opposite side of the ravine, they were seen to be agitated near the bank. The next moment they were parted in a careless manner, and the swarthy form and hideous features of a painted half-naked savage were partially discernible by our friends, who remained mute, gazing upon the object of their deadly hate, scarcely daring to breathe, lest the slightest sound should betray their presence. The wild, glaring eyes of the savage peered down into the ravine, and then seemed to take a close survey of all the bushes on the opposite side. What object he had in this singular scrutiny of such a place was never known to our friends; but as his piercing eyes seemed to rest rather longer upon the very spot where they were concealed than elsewhere, it will readily be supposed that the act caused them considerable uneasiness. They were already beginning to think their course hither had been noted, and this was one of the scouts sent out in search of them, and each was already laying plans in his own mind

for immediate action, in the event his suspicions should be verified—when the savage gave the peculiar grunt of his race, and turning about, said something to his companion—whereupon both withdrew, and continued slowly down the hill.

"Well," said Wetzel, drawing a long breath, so soon as he felt perfectly sure that the Indians were out of hearing, "that thar beats all fer an accident I ever seed since I first put feet on a Injin trail. I say fer a accident, Master Albert, it beats all I ever seed; an' I think as how it was a accident, or we'd a heard from the varmints afore this. It's Injin to be cunnin', powerful cunnin', I'll allow, with any man; but it arn't Injin to diskiver two white gintlemen like us, an' then jest walk away without as much as sayin' 'how d'ye do.' No! that thar painted heathen had some idee in his cussed head about somethin', or he wouldn't a com'd and looked down into this here holler that way, you may depind; but his fixin' his owlish eyes onto us was a nateral accident."

"It is well we were in here," returned Albert, "for had we remained in the more open part of the ravine, it is altogether probable that he would have seen us."

"That's jest what I think myself," rejoined Wetzel, "and altogether I look upon't as a very providential affa'r; for ef we'd bin a little sooner in gettin' on to the mountain; it's jest as like as not we'd bin diskivered; an' then good-bye to all our fight; for ef we warn't killed in a scrimmage, we'd be kept for roastin', so as the cusses mought hev a powerful heap o' fun when we started on the last trail."

"But is there no danger of these Indians now, think

you? May they not stumble upon our trail, and return to hunt us?" Albert asked.

"They mought, that's true. But I don't think as how they will. Still we must be powerful cautious what we do I can tell ye, an' no mistake. We're on Injin ground now, an' it won't do to go asleep whar our snorin' mought disturb the natives."

Having delivered himself of this worthy piece of advice, Wetzel cautiously crept out of his hiding place, followed by Albert, and climbing the steep bank which here rose several feet above them, our friends quitted the ravine, and proceeded to ascend the hill on the side opposite to where the Indians had descended. The way was rough, and they were often forced to crawl up here and there a precipitous rock, by taking hold of the branches of shrubs that had grown up through deep fissures, or which, planted firmly in the earth above, allowed their shaggy limbs to extend down within reach. The mountain on this side, as we have said, was rolling, or wave-like; and consequently, our friends had to descend into a trough or dingle almost as often as ascend a point. Still the descent was less than the ascent, and therefore every new point gained brought them nearer to the crowning summit of the whole. Although they moved slowly and cautiously, examining the ground on every side—often pausing, as was their custom, to listen, and looking behind as well as before—yet, in a little over a quarter of an hour after quitting the ravine, they came to the last elevation, which rose above them for something like a hundred feet, in the form of a precipice of standing pillars of stone, with huge masses resting on the tops of these in a horizontal

position. Here and there were deep fissures in the sides of the sandstone rocks—but no place where it seemed possible for a human being to gain the summit, except at the extreme right, where one could find a hold for his feet and hands, among branches of trees, shrubs, and projecting, jagged stones.

"Here's one o' natur's forts," observed Wetzel, still speaking in a guarded whisper, lest a lurking Indian might overhear the sound of his voice. "Ef we can onc't get on top, I think as how we'll be purty tolerable safe from the varmints, pertikerly ef none on 'em don't know we're here. Ef I'm not mistaken, that thar top has a view of thar hull village, an' everything else as is going on below us; an' ef we onc't git thar safe, an arterwards see any o' the cusses coming up, we can hide ourselves in holes, as old Satan, thar daddy, couldn't diskiver us out on, onless he know'd whar we was aforehand. But mind, now, keep your mouth shut, an' your eyes and ears wide open, fer we've got a powerful pertickelar business to do, ye may depind, on the honor o' a white gintleman."

There seemed little need for this caution concerning the loquacity of Albert. Of late he rarely spoke, unless addressed by his companion, or to make some particular inquiry, or to counsel with the other when danger threatened. On the present occasion he made no reply in words, but merely nodded his head, in token that he understood the old hunter, and then cautiously moved away toward the point where the rocks appeared easiest of ascent.

"You're right, lad," pursued the old woodsman,

as he cautiously followed him. "You're right lad, fer it's doin' an' not talkin', we should be arter now."

By dint of pulling hard upon the bushes above them, planting their feet on the jutting crags of the cliff, and occasionally crawling on their hands and knees, our two adventurers gradually raised themselves, till at last they stood upon the very back-bone of the Standing Stone. Then it was that a scene burst upon their view, that we, in our humble way, shall attempt to describe in the following chapter.

Chapter XV

A HURON VILLAGE AND INDIAN SPORTS

It has already been said that it was in the autumn of the year that the daring adventure of proceeding into the Indian country to watch the movements of the savages was attempted by our worthy friends. The day on which they reached the summit of the Standing Stone was one of the most delightful of that charming season generally known as Indian Summer—though why so called, we confess our inability to explain. Some have supposed it to be caused by the burning of the great prairies, to which it is well known the Indians of the far West set fire, the better to facilitate getting at the game concealed in the dense cover of the tall, thick-matted grass, and in this way they account for the smoky veil that dims the cerulean brightness of the heavens. But be this as it may, we leave the reader to surmise the cause to please his own fancy, while we proceed to speak of the effect, or describe the day and the scene as it fell upon the vision and senses of our hunters.

The sun was already in mid-heaven, but its brightness was somewhat dimmed by a hazy veil that spread throughout the atmosphere, softening the appearance of every distant object, and causing that delightful, dreamy sensation, so peculiar at this season of the year. The air was neither too warm nor too cold, but just at that invigorating tempera-

ture to make the blood course evenly through one's veins, and cause a mood equally well fitted for active exertion, or calm meditative contemplation. A light air was stirring from the west, bringing neither the oppressive sultriness of summer, nor the chilliness of winter. Not a cloud was visible in the heavens, which were unrolled in all their beauty, as seen through the before mentioned hazy atmosphere. A few frosts had touched the green leaves of summer and already the foliage of the trees was undergoing that beautiful change and variety of color which precedes the dark yellow leaf of final decay. Wherever the forest could be seen, and away to the north and south it seemed boundless, it presented all the variegated hues of the rainbow—now green, now yellow, now white, now blue, now dark brown and purple—as some spots, from the growth being more fragile and more exposed, yielded to the first decay of advancing winter; while others, more hardy, or less exposed, still retained, with the tenacity which belongs to the things of life, the almost unchanged green hue of the summer, and mingled their foliage with the many colored flowers which ever grace the autumn of the year. But not upon the beauties of the changing forest, but upon what lay before them was the gaze of our spies directed.

From where they stood, concealed by a breastwork of stone, our two gallant scouts commanded one of the most extensive and picturesque views to be seen at that day in any section of the Great West. For a hundred feet below them was an almost perpendicular wall of stone, so smooth and upright that none could climb it. At the base of this wall or precipice,

the ground—covered with trees, and a thicket of hazel and plum bushes—sloped off gradually to a beautiful plain, clear of any obstruction but such as had been placed upon it by the hand of man. On this plain, in full view, and at a distance of half a mile, was the village of the Wyandotts, consisting of more than a hundred wigwams. The larger portion of these stood on the margin of the prairie near the Hock-hocking, glimpses of which could occasionally be seen by our scouts near the main village, and the whole course of which could be traced for a considerable distance as it swept around the town, by the dense thicket which fringed its banks on either side.

The huts, or wigwams, were constructed in the most simple manner possible. Two stakes were first driven into the earth, each stake having a crotchet about the height of a man above the ground. A pole was next laid horizontally on these crotchets, against which sticks were placed in a leaning posture, so that their lower ends would stand out far enough from the line perpendicular to form the breadth of the hut, the whole, the ground being considered the line of the base, forming a rude triangle. This was the skeleton of the hut, and only required to be covered with bark, with one end left open, to be complete. No chimney was needed; for the fire used for cooking and warming, was kindled outside, to which men, women, and children alike had access. If a door was wanting at night, the skin of a buffalo, or of some other wild animal, was hung up in front of the lodge, and this was all that was necessary—those primitive and simple-minded people, unlike the

more civilized and enlightened Christian nation that now occupies what was once their country, requiring neither locks nor bars to keep out a prowling band of thieves or midnight assassins.

The appearance of the village from the stand occupied by our scouts, was quite imposing—not the less so, probably, because in its numerous inhabitants they beheld so many bloodthirsty, implacable foes of their race. The cabin of the chief was easily distinguished from the others, both by its size and general appearance of superiority. It stood near the center of the main village, (by which we mean the principal cluster of huts—for like some of our modern settlements, there was the town proper, with straggling lodges reaching off in various directions, some even extending along the plain to the hills on the north) and on a small rounded hillock from the base of which issued a silvery stream, apparently proceeding from a spring of water, which doubtless had exerted its silent influence on the mind of the chief in selecting this location. Beyond the town, or farther away on the plain, were large fields of golden corn, now just in the maturity of the harvest, and still beyond, the eye had a long sweep, with not even a tree or a shrub to obstruct the vision, till the brown or green earth and the blue sky blended, and the actual line of the horizon was lost to view.

Perhaps a bird's eye view of the whole landscape will give the reader a better general idea of the spot, than the imperfect description we have already attempted.

Imagine, then, the Standing Stone to be a mount, completely isolated from all other hills—though

placed contiguous to them, on the borders of a large, grassy plain—and that you are seated on its highest elevation and extreme front. Behind you, to your right, and to your left, are hills and an undulating country, covered with a heavy forest, now displaying all the variegated hues of autumn. Before you, commencing at your very feet, as it were, is a fertile plain, stretching away westward as far as the eye can reach, covered with a heavy greensward that has felt the blight of one or two frosts, and diversified with beautiful wild flowers of the brightest and most showy colors. Away to the left, in front, runs a narrow line of checkered thicket, marking the course of the beautiful Hock-hocking, beyond which your eye again rests upon a luxuriant valley, which is soon shut in by a row of hills. Near this stream, but between it and you, you can perceive the clustering lodges of the Hurons, ranged along the bank of the river, but some of them scattered along the plain, even to the base of the hills to your right, so as to be lost to the view from where you stand. Dotting the plain, in yellow patches, are fields of corn, wherein squaws are already at work, gathering the golden harvest. The village, containing altogether a population of more than five hundred souls, is swarming with inhabitants. Warriors, squaws, and children, are seen moving lazily about among the rude huts, or sauntering off toward the race-ground, which lies directly in front of you, almost within ordinary hearing distance. Here it is, after all, that your gaze would naturally be riveted; and here it was, our gallant spies, after a cursory glance at what we have described, fixed their eyes and their whole

attention, for here more than a hundred warriors were assembled, most of them painted in the customary manner of the tribe when preparing to start upon the warpath. Besides these regular warriors—who were nearly all young, finely formed, athletic men—there were as many more of what might be considered spectators, consisting of old sachems, squaws, and children. Of this latter class, some were very old men, and these were mostly seated, or squatted, upon the greensward, with pipes in their mouths, lazily puffing out the smoke, and gazing indolently about them, with all the imbecility of age—their heads bared to the sun, and their long gray scalp-locks hanging round their necks, or dangling down their half-naked backs, presenting a wild and grotesque appearance. Others less aged, but not sufficiently agile to take part in the more active proceedings, were grouped about in various attitudes, among the children and squaws, watching, with the various expressions of pleasure with which such a collection of spectators looks upon the prowess of youth, the war-like movements of the young warriors.

These latter had apportioned themselves a perfectly level spot of ground, some fifty yards square, within which to display their skill, strength, and activity. Around the borders of this square the spectators were collected—the same care being taken to keep them without the lines of the arena as is displayed towards the lookers-on of a military parade. The children, in the main, manifested by far the most delight in what was taking place. They clapped their little hands, occasionally laughed loudly, and exhibiting all the wayward and innocent joyousness

of childhood, as seen on a grand gala day among a more enlightened, Christianized, and entirely different race of beings. The squaws, when they had leisure, looked on with satisfaction at the feats of the braves, all of whom were more or less connected with them by ties of blood. We say, when they had leisure; for it is well known that the squaws of the Indians, no matter of what tribe or nation, do all the manual labor and drudgery, and consequently these in question were not exempted from the common requirements. They were continually being sent hither and thither, to carry this thing and bring that; and the whole space between the race-ground, (as for convenience we shall designate the place of gathering) and the village, was lined and dotted with them, going and coming—generally on some trifling errand—many of them with pappooses, hardly a week old, strapped to their backs in the customary form.

At the suggestion of Colonel Martin, Albert had brought with him a small sized, but remarkably fine telescope, and by keeping this to the eye, he could see all that was going on, with the minuteness we have and shall continue to describe the proceedings.

Within the arena already mentioned, were assembled the warriors, drawn up with stately dignity on one side of the square, so as to give the spectators two sides for observation. At the precise moment we introduce them to the reader—or rather, bring our gallant spies into a position where they can behold and watch them narrowly—they were preparing for a trial of skill in throwing the tomahawk. At the southern end of the square—or the one

opposite where the warriors stood, and which in the disposition of actors and spectators, was left vacant—a stake had been driven into the earth, so as to stand about the height of an ordinary man above the level. Against this stake was placed the effigy of a man, in such a posture that, if struck violently in front with a tomahawk, it would fall to the ground. The effigy was covered with skins and stuffed and painted so as to resemble as much as possible a living man. So clever was the imitation that our scouts at first thought it to be an unfortunate prisoner about to be used as a living target.

The head was made of a block of wood, over which a skin was tightly drawn, and rudely daubed in spots to represent the eyes, nose, and mouth. Into this head of wood the tomahawk, if it struck it properly, might bury itself sufficiently to remain there till drawn by force; and moreover, the point of the target, toward which the skill of the thrower was directed, being the forehead, just above and between the eyes, the weapon, by remaining there, would give the successful warrior a more complete triumph, than if it bounded off from other parts of the figure. A few feet beyond the target, a broad breast-work of logs, some eight feet high, had been erected to stop the tomahawks that might miss the human representative altogether.

Everything being in readiness, a young warrior, one of the youngest of the party, stepped forward to within about twenty paces of the mark, and measuring the distance carefully with his eye, threw back his right foot, head, and shoulder, and flung the weapon with all his force. Whiz it went through

the air, and just grazing the right shoulder of the effigy, half-buried itself in the logs beyond. A joyous shout from the children greeted even this indifferent success. Walking up to the log, the Indian withdrew his tomahawk with the air of one who felt a little abashed, and, returning, took his place among the group. Another now stepped forward and going through the same motions, sent his tomahawk whirling through the air. But he struck more wide of the mark than the other, and a shout of merry laughter rather added to his chagrin, as, withdrawing his weapon, he silently took his place in the rear of his companion. A third, a fourth, a fifth now made the trial, and still the target remained untouched, if we except the slight graze of the tomahawk of the first thrower. The sixth one now stepped forward, and with a more experienced aim, planted a well-directed blow in the abdomen of the effigy, which doubled forward and fell to the ground. A loud, boisterous shout from the spectators attested their satisfaction at his signal triumph over all his predecessors. As the warrior replaced the target, and walked back to his companions, it was easy to perceive by his gait and manner, that he felt he had performed a feat of which he had no reason to be ashamed.

More than twenty trials were now made in regular and orderly succession by as many different members of the band, and with results similar to those we have described. The target was knocked down some half dozen times—but always by a chance blow on the shoulder, breast, abdomen, or legs—not one as yet having touched the head.

At length a tall, noble-looking warrior stepped

proudly and confidently forward, and turned a dignified look upon the spectators, as if courting inspection of his every movement. If such was his desire, he was fully gratified, for every eye was fixed upon him intently, and a profound stillness reigned throughout the assemblage. In one portion of the crowd, to his right, and consequently on the side of the arena farthest from our scouts, the gaze of the Indian seemed to rest a little longer than elsewhere. Albert, who had held the glass to his eye, watching closely every movement, now turned his instrument in that direction, and beheld the young and rather comely face of a maiden, looking upon him with two black eyes, and giving him an approving smile. As yet he had not been able to get more than a profile view of the features of the warrior; but as the latter turned from her who was evidently regarded in the light of a sweetheart, for a momentary glance at the other line of spectators to his left, his full face was for a moment brought in the direction of the Standing Stone.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Albert, in a low, guarded tone, but one full of deep excitement, dropping the glass from his eye, and extending it to his companion, "quick, Wetzel!—take this, examine carefully the warrior who is about to throw, and tell me if you ever saw him before."

Wetzel took the telescope as directed, and adjusted it to his eye; but he was too late to catch a full view of the other's features, who was already in the act of displaying his skill with the tomahawk. The next moment the weapon went whizzing through the air, and fairly lodged in the head of the image, which,

in consequence, reeled and tottered, like a thing of life, and then fell prostrate on the earth. A universal shout, such as had not before been given, ascended from every throat—actors as well as spectators—men, women, and children—and striking the mural surface of the Standing Stone, rebounded, echoed and re-echoed among the fissures and crags of neighboring hills, till the whole country seemed alive with fiends in their unearthly revels. Curiosity now could brook no restraint, and the whole crowd simultaneously rushed forward, to gaze in admiration upon the successful hit, leaving the triumphant warrior standing alone too proud and dignified to show any childish anxiety about the result of his own superior skill. Even the old men, before noted, seemed to arouse from their lethargy at the ringing shout, and rising to their feet with great difficulty, tottered off to join the others; while several squaws, half-way between the race ground and village, hurried forward to learn the cause of such joyful excitement.

The throw was remarkably clever, though by no means a perfect one. Instead of hitting the forehead in the center, the blade of the tomahawk had buried itself in the soft cottonwood about an inch too low, and the same distance too far to the right, actually dividing one of the painted eyes. Still it was a feat to boast of, for, where there was one that could excel it, there were a thousand that could not equal it, in average throwing, and let distance and all be considered.

Though left by himself, in fair open sight, it was some time before Wetzel could get a good front view

of the successful warrior's features. The moment he did so, he dropped the glass from his eye, and exclaimed:

"That's one o' the cusses as had you in tow the night I gin him sich an orful skeer, by poppin' over his greasy comrades, or else I've got a powerful bad recollection."

"I am right, then, in my impression and memory," returned Albert. "It is he—one of the two that escaped; it is Ogwehea, the leader of the party that captured me. It was he," Albert continued in a tremulous voice, "that told me Forest Rose, my own dear little Forest Rose, was dead. Oh, God! that I could only feel certain he told me the truth!—for, since I cannot find her, it would be some consolation to know she is in heaven, in communion with my dear kindred who preceded her, and whom I hope ere long to join."

"Well," rejoined Wetzel, in his rude, off-hand way, "I don't car' a cuss who he is, or what he's called, but I'd jest gin a dozen buffler hides for one squint at him, at a hundred yards, over old Killnigger's back, an' nobody by to distarb the fun. If I didn't make a hole in his greasy face more powerfuller nor he's made in that thar painted 'figy, may I lose all my shootin' natur', an' be dogged with skunks till no Christyen dar' come anigh me."

As to these remarks Albert did not see proper to reply; the old hunter remained silent, and both again fixed their eyes and attention upon the plain. By this time the crowd had begun to separate, and the warriors were already resuming their places, preparatory to a renewed trial of skill. At length, order

being restored, and everything in readiness, another warrior stepped forward, and was just in the act of poising his weapon behind him, when a long, and peculiar whoop reached them from the village. All started, and eagerly turned their gaze in that direction. A moment's silence ensued, and then the welkin rang with answering yells, that again echoed among the crags and fissures of the hills, as if all the imps of the infernal regions had suddenly been let loose; whereupon, abandoning their sports, the whole party, whooping and hallooing, set off at a jumping run toward the center of their rude town.

Chapter XVI

THE HURON CHIEF—PERFECTION OF SKILL—AND MOUNTAIN CAMP

The cause of this sudden commotion our scouts could not for some time divine. Near the village a large crowd was collected, and seemed to be in eager discussion. A long and careful scrutiny through the glass at length revealed the secret. A new party of warriors, from some of the neighboring tribes, had arrived to join the Hurons in their sports, and prepare themselves to set off on the warpath with them as auxiliaries. As the Huron warriors neared them, the others—some fifty in number, from one of the allied tribes of the Shawnees* came forward, and each party greeted the other in the customary manner of the Indians. For a few moments all remained in a body near the village, with the squaws and children standing back looking on, and then the whole company, consisting of both parties, set off toward the race-ground—the Wyandotts, or Hurons**, forming the van and rear, as an escort to their guests.

*This word, we believe, is correctly spelled Shawanoese; but custom has altered it to Shawnees; and for convenience, we adopt the popular orthography.

**The reader will perceive that we have made Wyandott and Huron synonymous terms, as in truth they were, both being applied to the tribe in question. But for greater convenience, we will use only the term Huron hereafter; and for the same purpose, we will designate all the other tribes—whether Miamies, Pottawattomies, Chippewas, Ottawas, or what not—under the general title of Shawnees, with which nation they were allied, and whose language was spoken in common by all the tribes, the Hurons only excepted.

Soon after they arrived upon the ground preparations were made for continuing the warlike sport so recently abandoned. The Shawnees, through their interpreter, were invited to take a part in the proceedings, and the throwing of the tomahawk was again resumed. For more than an hour this was carried on in the same manner as we have already described—though, we must admit, with greater skill—older and more experienced hands gradually taking the place of the younger novices. Several times the hatchet had been lodged in the head of the effigy, and every time the skillful marksman had been greeted with the accustomed shout of gratification.

At length a small party, consisting of four individuals, was seen slowly approaching from the village, followed by a long train of squaws and children, at a respectful distance. On this becoming known to the assembled warriors, the sports ceased, and all stood awaiting them in respectful silence.

"Thar come thar chiefs," observed Wetzel. "An' fer Injins, they're powerful good lookin' fellers, I'll hev to allow—though I'd a —— sight rayther be sp'ilin' thar beauty, an' takin' thar topknots, nor seein' 'em from here, through this here harmless bit o' glass an' wood. Here, take a look fer yourself, Master Albert;" and he handed his companion the telescope, which, till now, he had kept in his own possession since the first breaking up of the crowd.

Albert turned the glass upon the new comers, and was forced to admit that he had rarely seen four as handsome looking men, physically considered. Of the four, three of them were not less than six feet in

stature, and proportioned with all the symmetry, grace, and muscular power which the artist, who copies nature, so delights to contemplate. The fourth personage was larger, taller, more muscular, and more commanding in person, every way, than his companions. He was not less than six feet six inches in height, but so beautifully proportioned that to have seen him standing alone, with none near, by which to draw comparison, ten to one he would not have seemed above the ordinary stature. He was just of an age, too, to give him a dignified appearance, without associating with it the idea that his mental or physical faculties were in the least impaired. Straight as an arrow, with head erect, and nostrils slightly expanded, he walked with a grace and ease that none could excel, and with all the proud dignity of a sovereign—his dark eagle eye, and "front of Jove," assuring all who beheld him that they gazed upon no ordinary man. From the marked deference paid him, even by his comrade chiefs, it was easy to perceive he was as much their superior in rank and power as in physical proportions. On the present occasion he was evidently dressed with some care, though with little ostentation. His scalp-lock was ornamented with the feathers of the bird whose name he bore, and which, as was sometimes customary, had been given to his village. His breast and arms, with the exception of paint, were entirely bare—though from his ears depended a couple of coarse, heavy jewels which had undoubtedly been presents to him from British agents of the Canadas. Around his loins he wore a skirt of soft-dressed deer-skin, showily embroidered with beads of divers colors, in

which the brightest, and those of strongest contrast, predominated. Securing this skirt was the usual wampum belt, also highly wrought with beads, in which were carelessly stuck the never-failing accompaniments, the tomahawk and scalping-knife, the haft of the latter inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl—this being also a present from his white allies—and the blades of both glittering, as though they had never been dimmed in the blood of a human being. Bright scarlet leggings, encircled with rows of parti-colored beads and little silver bells, that tinkled as he walked, together with moccasins in correct keeping, completed his attire. Such was Tarhe* the head chief of the Wyandott nation, at that day one of the most powerful and blood-thirsty tribes of the Northwest Territory.

The companions of Tarhe, as we have said, were all chiefs. One was Tobey, his own subordinate, and the other two were Shawnees. All wore marks of distinction similar to those of Tarhe, though less tasty and less valuable. As they approached the arena, the young warriors drew themselves up with an air of the most profound respect, in two lines, through which the chiefs entered the ground of contest—the spectators keeping silence. Having carelessly examined the ground for a moment or two, the chiefs moved forward to the target, while the warriors resumed their places at the opposite end, and the crowd of spectators took up their position,

*Anglice, Crane. The village we have described was called after the chief, Tarhetown, or Cranetown. It was the principal one of the tribe or nation; but there was another, some eight or ten miles distant, called by the whites, Tobeytown, after the chief Tobey, who was a subordinate of Tarhe. (Tobeytown stood on the present site of the village of Royalton, Fairfield County.)

as before, on the right and left of the hollow square.

After a close examination of the target and breastwork, during which several approving nods and grunts of satisfaction were made and uttered, the chiefs slowly returned to the assembled warriors, and Tarhe gave the signal that he wished the sports to be resumed. His wish was immediately complied with. Drawing aside, in such a manner as to face the Standing Stone, he folded his arms on his broad, manly chest, and looked on, with all the proud dignity and gravity which a monarch of the olden time might be supposed to view the deadly contests of his own fierce gladiators.

As a matter of course, there was no little feeling of jealous rivalry among the warriors of both tribes, all of whom were exceedingly anxious to distinguish themselves in the presence of their venerated commanders. Nor was the pride of success alone on the part of the braves; for whenever a hatchet lodged in the head of the effigy, those who watched the countenances of the chiefs closely could perceive a brightening of their dark eyes, the only signs of gratification manifested, by which one could know that these gallant stoics were secretly pleased.

As the trial of skill had now fallen upon the older and more experience part of the warriors, nearly every throw lodged the tomahawk in the head of the effigy—the only difference being in the distance it struck from the central mark, which, as if it bore a charm, still remained untouched. The trial had become very exciting, too, so that even the most aged veterans, some of whom had in their day been chiefs of renown, drew nigh to witness it. Perceiving this

movement, Tarhe motioned them to approach him, and even accorded them a stand of honor in front of his own commanding person. Out of respect to the chiefs, all was conducted with due decorum and in perfect silence, none venturing to give vent to their gratification, as heretofore, in a single shout. Even the children looked grave, as if they comprehended in whose presence they stood.

Thus another hour rolled away, when Tarhe signified to the Shawnee chiefs that he would make a trial with them. This being readily assented to, the first chief stepped forward, displaying his fine person to the best advantage, and with such a manly effect that low murmurs of approbation involuntarily ran among the assemblage, he poised his tomahawk, with the carelessness of confidence, and threw it with fatal precision. Every eye watched it during its evolutions, and when it buried its keen blade in the forehead of the human representative, only half an inch to the left of the center, one simultaneous shout burst from the lips of the multitude. Even the eyes of the Huron chief gleamed with unusual satisfaction, as he gave an approving nod. The other chief now stepped forward, with an appearance no less imposing than his companion, and flung his weapon with a skill that showed him to be a dangerous warrior to his foes.

It was now Tarhe's turn. Everything had conspired to raise the excitement to such a pitch that not a single being moved, and not a breath could be heard in all that vast assemblage. Conscious that every eye was upon him, and that in himself was centered the pride of his own powerful nation, whose

triumph or chagrin would be alike in his victory or defeat—in his excelling or being excelled by his Shawnee brothers—he walked boldly forward to the usual stand of the thrower, without the least apparent trepidation, and after coolly surveying the ground for a moment, quietly stepped back some five or six paces, as if he disdained to be on an equality with his predecessors, even in distance. This act alone, in anyone else, would have drawn forth a shout of applause; but in the present instance all were too excited to let even so much as a breath be heard.

Having fixed himself in a suitable position, the chief drew forth his bright tomahawk, and glancing at its shining blade, poised it in his hand a few times, much as a woodchopper handles his ax preparatory to striking a powerful and accurate blow. All this time he had been standing erect, in the center of the arena, alone, with his feet close together, and so even, that two parallel lines would have touched alike both toes and heels. Nothing could be finer and more commanding than his clearly-defined, symmetrical, half-naked form, with its full, rounded, muscular arms and chest, set off below with the ornamental trappings of a chief. And then his head, so erect, with its slightly aquiline nose, expanded nostrils, well-turned mouth, bold, high forehead, and dark, eagle eye—which he calmly fixed upon the object toward which his skill was about to be directed—made him indeed appear a something worthy of admiration, as the work of the Great Unseen, even though he was lost to civilization and Christianity.

For a moment the Huron chief stood as we have described him. Then giving a loud, short whoop,

he threw himself back upon his right foot, with a motion like lightning. The next instant the tomahawk whirled past his head with almost incredible velocity, and was seen for a second or two flashing the sun's rays from its bright blade, and then it struck with a dull sound, and buried itself completely to the eye in the exact center of the forehead of the effigy, actually splitting it open, in spite of the skins around it, as it would have done the skull of a human being. There was another moment of breathless surprise and admiration, during which the target slowly tottered over sideways. Then the air was rent with whoops, cries, screams, shrieks, and yells of exultation, which lasted for some five minutes without cessation.

As if being satisfied with what he had done, without caring for the effect it produced on the minds of the people, the Huron chief sauntered leisurely away in the direction of his village, leaving the crowd to exult in his triumph, and some one of the many warriors to restore him his weapon, which was done by a Shawnee brave, with an air of veneration, ere he had gone over half the distance which divided the race-ground from the town, the young man having been the first to reach the effigy after its fall.

The Shawnee chiefs accompanied Tarhe, together with several of the old sachems, and most of the spectators and warriors gradually followed, there being no longer curiosity of sport sufficient to keep them at the arena. A few of the younger and less experienced of the Hurons and Shawnees remained on the ground, however, more for the purpose of practicing, than display of skill. But gradually they

became weary of the sport, and dropped off, one after another, till at last the plain in front of the scouts, so lately occupied by more than five hundred human beings, including both sexes and all ages and sizes, was left entirely vacant, and a deep silence reigned upon the deserted spot.

The day was now fast declining, and already the sun was drawing near the verge of the Western horizon. The great forest was already beginning to assume the sober gray of approaching night, while in the deep valleys and glens the heavy shadows of the hills rested, and gave them the darkening hue of twilight. Birds that had fluttered over the heads of our scouts through the day, and sung their sylvan songs in the branches of the neighboring trees, were gradually disappearing, one after another, to seek their accustomed places of rest; while others, to which night was day, were already preparing to leave their haunts and venture off in quest of food.

Being now, as it were, completely left to themselves, with no prying eyes or savages near to detect them, should their persons chance for a moment to be exposed, our spies naturally bethought them of seeking a proper place of rest for their own weary limbs and bodies. For this purpose both crept cautiously from behind their rocky parapet, whence they had so long and closely watched the enemies of their race, and still keeping their persons, as much as possible, concealed from any chance straggler on the plain, they proceeded to reconnoiter their new home, (for home it was to be to them for days, perhaps for weeks, unless accidentally discovered), with some such feelings as must have been uppermost in the mind of

Robinson Crusoe, when he first took a survey of his lonely island, with a view to learn what were its natural advantages toward giving him comfortable quarters and protection against man or beast during the period he would be obliged to remain there. The cases are not parallel, we admit, for while our scouts had voluntarily sought their present lonely and dangerous location, and had power to retreat at any moment, Crusoe had been forced upon his by accident, and had no means of leaving it; but still there was a similarity, inasmuch as both parties found a necessity for remaining, and both alike felt the loneliness of their situation.

The spot, on examination, was found more convenient for our scouts than they had anticipated. The area of the top of the Standing Stone, as we have already said, was about a hundred yards in length, by some thirty in breadth. They were admirably protected, from any chance view, by heavy rocks, lying horizontally on top of the upright pillars of nature, and by stunted trees and dense shrubbery, that had here and there shot their trunks and branches up from a foothold of earth through numerous fissures. Some of the rocks, being soft, had been hollowed out by the floods of centuries, and in their cavities was found a goodly quantity of water, which had not had time to evaporate since the last rain. This was a matter of great importance to our friends as there were no springs on the mountain, and consequently no other means of quenching their thirst than to seek for the liquid element on the banks of the Hock-hocking—a proceeding alike troublesome and dangerous. Near the southern end of their lim-

ited space, a spot was found that would serve them admirably for a sleeping place at night. A large flat rock, some ten feet by twenty, was lodged upon some smaller rocks, so as to project over them, and leave a cavity sufficiently large for our spies to crawl into, and be protected from the cold night dews and frosts, which, at this season of the year, and in this climate, were very severe, and which they could not guard against by fire, as the light of it would be sure to expose them, and bring down certain destruction upon their heads. At the base of this rock, which was some five feet below the level, the ground rock, upon which the smaller stones that propped it up rested, was level as a floor, and ran off to the front of the precipice, some six or eight feet distant, where, as if to protect our scouts from accidently rolling off in their sleep, another heavy rock stretched along, and even slightly overhung the precipitous verge. A few bushes on the southern side, and a small tree on the northern, whose branches spread completely overhead, formed the end walls and canopy to this delightful retreat, and served to screen the little bedroom, if we may so term it, from the eye of one standing above. As if to add to its convenience, too, the front rock, or parapet, was so raised at one end that a person lying flat upon the stone forming the floor, could look under it, and note nearly everything taking place on the plain, and yet be himself completely concealed from observation.

"Well," said Wetzel, as he descended into his new home, followed by Albert, "I'll hev to allow that natur's done the decent thing for us; an' ef we can't be content here, we oughter be obligated to sleep on p'inted rocks in the open air—them's my sentiments."

"A charming place, truly," returned Albert, surveying the spot with an air of meloncholy pleasure. "It does seem," he added, as all its conveniences gradually came into view, "as if this retreat was designed exactly for the uses to which we are about to put it."

"Couldn't hev bettered it much ef I had made it myself," was the satisfied rejoinder of his companion. "An' now we've got here, let's eat, for I've got a timepiece in me as says it's bin powerful long since last feedin' time."

Our two scouts now leaned their rifles against the rock, where they could grasp them at a moment, when Albert proceeded to open his knapsack, and take out, first a couple of canteens, then a couple of woolen blankets, and, lastly as much cold corn bread and jerked venison as he thought would serve them for their supper—this being the portable food with which they had plentifully supplied themselves. Wetzel did not open his knapsack, as it contained only the before mentioned corn bread and jerked venison; and being co-partners in everything there was no necessity for commencing on one stock till the other should be exhausted. Albert next filled one of the canteens with rain water, found in the hollows of the rocks, and the two friends sat down to their frugal repast, eating with that keen relish which long fasting and hard labor never fail to supply.

Ere their simple meal was finished the sun went down in a beautiful bed of golden yellow, which for a long time lingered on the western sky, gradually fading away into the dusky hue of night. Gradually, one by one, the brightest of the golden stars made

themselves faintly visible in the vault about—but the hazy atmosphere prevented the dimmer constellations from being seen. Gradually shadow after shadow crept upon the plain, till at last the dark outline of the earth blended with the air, and became lost to the view, as if a mighty veil had been drawn over it. Occasionally a laugh, or a merry shout, came borne on the still air from the village, the outlines of which could be traced by the light of its hundred lurid fires, which flashed up from the dark background; and figures could be seen stalking to and fro in the illumed space, which our scouts, with their knowledge of its inhabitants, could liken to nothing but fiends at their unearthly orgies. Gradually the sounds of merriment subsided, the fires burned more and more dim, and at last a drowsy quiet prevailed; and save the thousand night-singers, which made forest and plain vocal with their music, the occasional bark of a restless mastiff, the gloomy hooting of the owl, or the discordant howlings of hungry wolves, already roving about in quest of what they might devour—sounds that were familiar in a forest in those primitive days of border life—with the exception of these, we say, the deep repose and stillness of night had come.

Wetzel had long since crept under the rock, rolled up in his blanket, and was now enjoying a sound and healthy slumber. Albert, who had remained up, seated on a little stone, with his head leaning against a rock, wrapped in melancholy meditation, now began to feel the potent influence of Somnus, and prepared to follow his companion's example.

It required but little time to get himself in readiness for repose. Rolling his blanket carefully around him,

to keep off the damp chills of the night air, he crawled up alongside of his companion, and, placing his head on a stone, which was to serve him in place of a softer pillow, he soon fell into a light slumber, and for hours was rendered happy by dreaming a delightful dream of his own dearly beloved Forest Rose.

Chapter XVII

HURON WAR SPORTS

When our two friends aroused themselves to consciousness, it was broad daylight and the sun was just beginning to peer above the eastern horizon, and tip the mountain tops with its golden light. Of course their first look-out was toward the plain, which was again seen stretching away before them, covered with a light hoar frost. Nothing near was seen stirring, but far in the distance a small herd of buffalo was described, cropping the frosty herbage. The village still remained quiet; but a few early risers, mostly squaws, could be seen moving slowly about, relighting the extinguished fires, by which to prepare the morning's repast for their still slumbering lords and masters. Along the course of the river, and in the valley beyond, lay a dense, heavy fog, which, as the sun rose, lifted itself, and rolled away in huge masses, to dissolve and mingle itself with the less humid atmosphere.

In the course of half an hour, the village was again alive with its hundreds of primitive denizens. Warriors, squaws, and pappooses, were now seen lounging about, and occasionally grouped together, apparently discussing affairs of no great importance. Suddenly the buffaloes on the plain were seen to be violently agitated, and then they broke away pell-mell, taking a southerly direction. Immediately after, the cause

of this sudden commotion became apparent to our scouts. From the thicket that fringed the prairie near the base of the line of hills away to the right—which formed its northern boundary, a band of mounted hunters suddenly burst into view, and gave chase after the flying herd, more than one of whose number was already wounded by a simultaneous discharge of their rifles, though not so severely as to prevent a rapid flight.

"Thar go the cusses," chuckled Wetzel, "arter buffiers as mought awaited for 'em, ef they'd only know'd how to pi'nt thar pieces like white gintleman. Ods, bods! I'd jest like to see the cow—ay for that matter the bull ayther—that'ud make much headway arter old Killnigger had spoke to her, at the distance they was off when they fired. But what can a body 'spect one o' the red imps o' Satan to know 'bout handlin' white gintleman's inventions? 'Tain't thar natur's; an' consarn their greasy, thickheaded pates, they hain't got sense enough to know it. At murderin' women and children when they git 'em alone by themselves, they can do powerful, an' that's all they're good fer. Ah, see! They've stopped 'round somethin'; and it's maybe they've got one o' the critters arter all."

"They have," rejoined Albert, looking through the glass, for the distance was too great to mark anything distinctly with the naked eye. "They have surrounded a wounded animal that seems to make great efforts to escape, notwithstanding I have seen no less than six weapons discharged at it, at the distance apparently of the same number of paces."

"Yes, thar it is agin," resumed Wetzel, whose prejudice and inveterate hatred of the Indians would

not permit him to give them credit for anything.

"Thar it is agin, jest as I 'spected—shoot six rifle balls into a wounded buffler, an' then not be able to mor'n fotch him to his knees, when one bullet rightly p'inted, would lay him so dead that he'd ferget to kick. Thunder! I only wish I war the buffler for about the length o' five minutes! I'd bet a horn o' powder agin a gun flint, I could knock the hind sights off o' ever thievin', murderin' devil o' 'em, an' put 'em on a bee trail for thar squaw women a heap faster nor they rid down thar."

"There, they have conquered at last!" pursued Albert, who had closely noted the progress of events on the plain during the remarks of his companion, and who, being by this time thoroughly accustomed to the peculiar humors of the other, did not always deem it incumbent upon him to make any direct reply. "They have conquered at last; the bull is down, and to all appearance, dead. Yes, some of them are dismounting, and there, now, they have fallen upon him, and are beginning to remove his hide."

"How many on 'em be thar altogether?" asked Wetzel.

"I can count fifteen."

"Fifteen red niggers onto one buffler!" returned the old hunter, contemptuously. "Thunder! What sneakin', murderin', thievin' cowards these here same Injins is. Fifteen cusses on to one bull buffler, when I've knocked many a one over, an' nobody by, an' thought nothin' about it arterwards."

"Of course one white gentleman is more than a match for fifteen Indians?" observed Albert, a little mischievously.

"In course he is," returned Wetzel, with a matter-of-fact gravity. In course he is. But what's that thar hollerin' about?"

"The Indians are coming toward the race ground, to begin their sports for the day," replied Albert, looking toward the village, and perceiving a large party in the act of leaving it.

In the course of another half hour the scene in front of our hunters was materially changed. By this time a large crowd, of the same mingled character as we have already described, was collected on the race ground; and while some resumed the sport of throwing the tomahawk, others amused themselves by running foot-races, leaping, and jumping. The foot-racing was a very exciting and popular amusement, judging from the numbers who entered into the contest, and the degree of merriment it occasioned in all parties. A little south of the arena a stake was driven into the earth, to mark the point of starting, and another about a quarter of a mile west of it, to designate the point of turning. At the former place some fifty young men arranged themselves in a low row, side by side, all facing westward. A few old men stood by to act as judges, and give the signal for setting out. One of these held a rude drum, fashioned like a tambourine, being merely an untanned deerskin drawn tightly over a hoop, and having a width of rim of some six inches. When all were ready for a start he would strike this with a stick he held for the purpose, and away would bound the whole party—whooping, hallowing, yelling, and jumping—each straining every nerve to outdo his fellows. The race was to end where it began; and when the party neared

the opposite stake, then came the great trial of skill and activity, to keep up their speed, turning without losing too much time, and dart off again in an opposite direction. Of all that set out, some three or four of the party would always have the lead of the main body at the winning-post, and one would generally be winner, though often by not more than a couple of feet, while the others would be scattered sometimes the whole distance between the two points.

The race was at last most warmly contested between Ogwehea and a young Shawnee. Twice they came in together, breast to breast, neither having been able to gain a foot, or even an inch on his rival, either in going down to the turn, or in coming back. This was so remarkable that all the other runners held back, to give them the ground to themselves, till the contest should be decided. The third time they ran by themselves, and so exciting had the race for victory now become, that the tomahawk arena was abandoned, and the whole crowd drew themselves up in two long lines, covering the whole ground between the stakes, to witness the grand trial. At the tap of the drum both started precisely together, as on previous occasions, and kept so till they reached the opposite stake. But here, in turning, the young Shawnee accidentally slipped, by which the other gained a single foot, an advantage he kept all the way back. A loud shout from the excited and breathless crowd, proclaimed the final victory of Ogwehea.

"I know'd it," said Wetzel, giving vent to one of his peculiar, low, quiet laughs. "I know'd it all the time. I know'd that thar cuss must win, by the practice he had in running away from old Killnigger here,

the night I sot you at liberty, Master Albert. But I'd jest like to git down thar and show 'em what a white gintleman's heels looks like at that distance. The greasy varmint's'd think they war standin' still."

After the decision of this race, the crowd gradually separated again, and while some continued at this amusement, others returned to the arena—as, by way of distinction, we must designate the place of throwing the tomahawk—while others, divided into groups, in different parts of the plain, proceeded to practice leaping, wrestling, dancing, and whatever other sports most pleased their fancy.

The scene, take it all in all, was very lively and animated—more so, even than that which our scouts had witnessed the day previous—and but for the knowledge that these same sports were gradually to prepare the actors to go on the bloody warpath against the almost defenseless whites of the frontiers, Albert and Wetzel would have viewed them with very different feelings from what they now experienced.

Meantime, the hunters returned, loaded with buffalo meat, and other game; and having done their part toward providing, for the day at least, against the wants of the village, they sauntered off to the race-ground, to take part in the amusements themselves.

Another sport, which was at length adopted—and which, being rather novel, again drew the separated parties together, either as spectators or to take part in it—consisted in a display of skill with firearms, and with the more primitive weapons, the bow and arrow. A new target was brought from the village, and bound to a stake near the base of the hill, between what we have termed the arena and the place where our spies

were stationed. This was to be shot at, facing the hill; and in consequence our friends had to be more guarded than ever against being in the slightest degree exposed.

When all was prepared, some twenty-five young warriors, all armed with rifles, began the sport. The spectators stood back, in a long line, facing the Standing Stone, but leaving a wide space between them and the target, so as to give the marksmen a clear ground. The warlike amusement was begun by the leader of the party starting off singly from his companions, and running with all his might in front of the effigy, at the distance of perhaps fifty paces, and discharging his rifle at it as he passed the central line. A tally man stood near the spot where the pieces were discharged, who, at every fire, instantly sprang forward, examined the target, and, if hit at all, indicated the precise spot, by placing his finger upon it, so that all the lookers-on could see at a glance each one's success or failure.

This warlike sport lasted some two or three hours, during which time nearly every warrior made a trial of his skill with the rifle. Judging from the number of times the finger of the runner touched the target in different places, the savages, as a body, might be considered no mean marksmen, even to those whose prejudices, like Wetzel's, most reluctantly conceded anything in their favor.

When this practcie with the rifle had become somewhat tiresome, it was abandoned, and the bow and arrow substituted. With this, even at the distance we have named, as a general thing, the shots were much better made than with the other weapon, and

the arrows were left to stick where they struck. The effigy at the close of the sport might be likened to a porcupine, with its quills protruding in every direction save one. In this manner it was finally borne in triumph to the village, and with this the events of the day closed.

Nothing of importance occurred throughout the second night our spies spent on the mount, and the following day the different sports were resumed, with the keen relish which the Indian is so well known to possess for warlike games. Toward noon, a new and more exciting amusement than any which had preceded it, was introduced. This was none other than horse racing. Some fifty high-mettled, beautiful horses were ridden upon the ground, by as many comely-formed, athletic young warriors. Nothing could be finer, more graceful, and artistic, than their display of equestrian skill, and even Wetzel was forced to admit that "Injins know'd somethin' about hosses." Without saddle, or bridle, or trappings of any kind—with only a sort of buckskin halter, which each held carelessly in one hand—they sat upon the bare backs of their steeds, as if rider and horse were one, and curveted, and pranced, and galloped, and ran, and wheeled, and all with a grace and ease that could not be surpassed, their half-naked and flexible bodies swaying to and fro, and yielding due poise to every muscle in full and manly play. It was a beautiful sight, and would have made an admirable study for the sculptor, seeking to immortalize himself with the modeling of a perfect equestrian statue.

After a sufficient display of their horsemanship, amid the triumphant yells of the crowd, the young

warriors drew themselves up at the starting point of the race, in the same manner as those had done who ran on foot. Here, apparently, the whole village was collected, a few squaws excepted, who had not received permission of their tyrranical masters to rest from their usual drudgery. Conspicuous above all, stood the noble and commanding figure of Tarhe, surrounded by inferior chiefs, old sachems, sages, and counsellors, like a king in the midst of his courtiers. At a given signal, away bounded the whole stud, as one beast, and like lightning flew over the plain, their feet scarcely seeming to touch the earth, and their riders sitting erect, and almost as immovable as so many statues of bronze. Away, away they went, and still away till some five miles divided them from the spectators when they brought the animals to a sudden halt, and faced about, forming a long, military line abreast, preparatory to the return. Here they waited some five or ten minutes, to give their horses time to recover their wind, and then the signal was given to start.

The coming in was the grand trial of the race—the going out being merely a preparatory exercise—and every exertion was now made to force each beast to his greatest speed. The riders no longer sat erect, but bending forward till their heads almost lay upon the necks of their flying coursers, they urged them onward with well-known sounds of encouragement, and with the ends of their long halters which they laid smartly on the animal's flanks, in place of riding switches, occasionally sounding the loud, shrill war-whoop, as if bearing down upon an enemy. On, on they came, like so many mounted devils, making the

very earth tremble under their thundering tread, and here and there, where the ground was more dry than elsewhere, raising a cloud of dust that completely enveloped them, as in the smoke of battle. On, on they came, and now the breathless and anxious multitude began to give way before their approach. For some two miles there was very little variation in the speed of the animals; then they began to separate, and here and there one to fall behind in the general contest. Still some fifteen or twenty kept the van, and for a mile or two further bade fair to divide the honors of the race. But within a mile of the spectators, the fleetest and best-bottomed studs began to distance their neighbors. Half a mile further, there were five abreast; but from these, two now sprang forward, and held the lead, and an even way, in spite of the desperate urgings of their riders, till within a hundred yards of the goal, when one suddenly leaped forward a few feet, and bore his gallant rider in a winner by half a length. A loud, long shout followed by extravagant yells of delight, again proclaimed Ogwehea victorious over his crestfallen competitor of the foot-race, the Shawnee brave.

But we shall not dwell longer upon the war sports of the savages, lest we weary the reader, at the same time that we delay the most important part of our story. It will be enough to say, that day after day our gallant spies witnessed the horse racing, shooting, tomahawk throwing, leaping, dancing, and running of their bitterest foes, from their lofty eyre among the rocks. Almost every day they saw their numbers increased by the arrival of some new war-party, whose appearance would be hailed by the terrible

war-whoop, that became more terrible still, in its echoes among the hills.

Nor must it be supposed that our spies had altogether a retreat of safety. Several times parties of Indians left the plain, and going around to its eastern base, ascended the Standing Stone, and stood upon its very backbone, within a few feet of our breathless hunters, who were either concealed in the fissures of the rocks, or were lying flat along the trunk of some old fallen tree, carefully covered with decaying leaves, their rifles, on every occasion firmly grasped, ready for the last emergency.

At last a new source of annoyance occurred. The water in the hollows of the rocks, that had served them thus far for drink, entirely gave out, and, as a matter of course, this staple beverage must be elsewhere procured, or their project, so near completed, be abandoned. Many times since occupying their present retreat, they had observed the squaws of the village carrying water from the base of the hillock to which reference has already been made, and hence were in no doubt as to the location of a spring in that vicinity.

"It'll hev to be did," observed Wetzel, "an thar's not a bit o' use to talk agin it. We'll hev to do one o' three things, sartin—ayther get the drink up here, die, or travel—and it's my opine we'd best git the drink."

Accordingly, after due preparation, and with great caution, Wetzel descended to the prairie, and keeping in the thicket which skirted its margin, he moved stealthily forward till he struck the river, near the hill upon which he knew Tarhe's lodge to be situated.

Turning short round a projection, the old hunter, to his great delight, found a beautiful spring of clear, cold water, which bubbled up out of the ground only a few paces distant, and, with a gentle murmur, glided over the earth and buried itself in the bosom of the Hockhocking. Filling his canteens, Wetzel did not pause to examine the beauties of the place but quickly and carefully made his way back to his companion who had awaited his return with many fears and misgivings.

This water served our spies for the next twenty-four hours, and then it came Albert's turn to procure a fresh supply. Following the directions of Wetzel, and using all his caution, he found his way to the spring and returned in safety. Several days now passed away, and alternately each scout ventured to the spring, and returned with filled canteens, while the other kept a sharp look-out on the movements of the savages—who had already increased to more than five hundred warriors—when the following thrilling adventure, so important in its results, took place.

Chapter XVIII

THE SURPRISE

Since the arrival of our scouts upon the Standing Stone, the weather had continued much as we described it in a preceding chapter. Every day the sun had risen and set in a soft, hazy, cloudless sky, its morning and evening beams displaying the brighest crimson and golden hues; but the eventful day of which we are about to speak, had brought with it those slight changes which are looked upon as the precursors of a storm. The Indian summer, so soft and delightful, was evidently drawing to a rapid close. For some days previous to this, the atmosphere had been observed to thicken with smoke, and every morning and evening the sun had set in a darker red. On the day in question, the heavy smoke had begun to gather itself into huge masses of various shapes, which piled themselves, one above the other, something like the thunder-heads we see rising in the West just preceding a summer shower. In consequence of this the atmosphere became clearer, and of a less monotonous appearance, and at times the sun shone brightly down, while at others his rays were completely hidden behind thick, dark clouds, that moving eastward with a stiff western breeze, bore deep, floating shadows over the face of the earth. The air, too, had become colder, and the decaying leaves on the trees rattled one against the other, and often fell in parti-

colored showers to the ground, where, unless again disturbed by a stronger current of air, they passed to the last stages of decay and dust, and yielded their mite toward enriching the productive soil.

On the day in question, the sun was near the meridian, when Albert prepared to set off again, to replenish the exhausted stock of water, and, as events turned out, to make his last visit to the spring. Looking carefully to the priming of his rifle, noting that the flint was in good order, and bidding Wetzel keep a guarded eye on the five hundred warriors assembled in various groups upon the plain—and, in case of an attack, to let his rifle warn him immediately, as he would do under like circumstances—he slung the canteens over his shoulder, and quietly departed. So many times had Albert and Wetzel gone to the spring, without meeting any adventure worthy of record, that both had in a measure become less guarded than was strictly prudent. On the present occasion Albert somehow felt strangely, as if something were about to transpire of the utmost moment to himself and companion, though of what nature he had no idea. His mind, naturally of late, of a very melancholy turn, now felt more gloomy and depressed than usual. Still he did not fear for himself, for he had been too long used to dangers in every form to give much thought to such a subject, and there was no more reason to apprehend a discovery by the Indians now, in fact less so, perhaps than at any previous moment since entering upon their immediate adventure.

Therefore, with his head bowed upon his bosom, in a sort of melancholy abstraction, in which, it must be confessed, one object—his own Forest Rose—ap-

peared bright and unsullied, as he had known her in happy days gone by — he picked his way slowly through the deep thicket of plum and hazel that grew upon the edges of the prairie, to the base of the hillock, of which we have before made mention. In less than half an hour from quitting his companion, Albert had turned the sharp projection of the hill and gained the spring. Filling his canteens with the same air of abstraction that had marked all his movements since leaving the Standing Stone, he sat down upon a moss-covered rock, and, placing his rifle in his lap, and his chin upon his hands, gazed silently into the limpid water, as it bubbled up from the cool earth, and, forming a tiny stream, sped away with a soothing ripple toward the Hock-hocking, into which it emptied and, mingling, became a portion of that stream, which, through various channels, at last finds its way to the Gulf of Mexico.

It was a delightful place for meditation, for nature had here united many of her most pleasing charms. The hill which projected so near to the river, took a graceful sweep away to the right leaving the spring near its base in a sort of cove—and rose to a considerable height above it. A small cluster of hazel bushes shot up at the head of the spring and fringed the opposite side of the little run, and also the margin of the river, their varigated leaves everywhere reflected in the limpid waters. A path was trod around the spring, showing that it was a frequent resort of the Indians. By the side of this path was the stone on which our young hero had seated himself, apparently regardless of his being in the very haunts of the Indians where discovery might prove fatal. Al-

ways brave—and, since his connection with Wetzel, generally cautious—he now exhibited a carelessness which was at total variance with his better judgment and experience, if not with his nature—denoting that his mind was absorbed in reflections that might have been made elsewhere with equal facility, and certainly with far greater prudence and safety. But long use had rendered danger a sort of second nature to him, and success so far in his enterprise, now led him to be regardless of those precautions that prudence so strongly dictated. He had seated himself upon the stone as coolly as if surrounded by the stockades of a well-garrisoned fort, without once turning the angle of the hill to see if anyone were approaching, or for that matter, even looking behind him. From the spring, where he first fastened his gaze, his eyes gradually turned upon the little run, and following the progress of a leaf that had fallen upon the water, his vision gradually became fixed upon the beautiful Hock-hocking, which a few yards distant was flowing smoothly past.

Here his whole attention was fixed, though his mind was wandering off to other days and other scenes, when he was suddenly startled from his reverie by hearing light steps behind him. Grasping his rifle, he sprang to his feet, and wheeling about suddenly, beheld two squaws within a few feet of him, both having turned the angle of the hill unperceived. He had just time to perceive that one was old, and the other young, when the former uttered a low, peculiar whoop, and the latter a short, sharp, startled scream. It was a fearful moment of thought—for well he knew another scream would bring upon him a whole band

of warriors and certain death in some form or other. But he did not lose his presence of mind, even under this terrible surprise. He quickly resolved that both must die; but knowing it would be fatal to the little hope remaining to use his rifle, he determined on inflicting a speedy and noiseless death. The Hock-hocking was flowing near, its waters about breast high, and drowning was the first mode of death that suggested itself.

All these thoughts were momentary, and ere the echoes of the first startling whoop had died away, Albert dropped his rifle, and bounding forward, caught each of the squaws by the throat. To drag them to the verge of the bank, with a strength almost superhuman, and plunge into the water, was the work of only another moment. Both struggled violently; but the strength of our young hero was more than equal to their efforts to escape or to raise an alarm. The water was up to his waist, with a current so strong that it was with the greatest difficulty he could maintain a foothold; but his life was depending on his exertion, and his strength seemed to increase to the power of a Hercules. In a moment both were submerged; but struggling desperately the younger raised her head above the water, in spite of all his efforts, though too much strangled to scream or even speak. The old woman now became troublesome in her death agonies; and thinking her the most to be feared, Albert, placing one hand over the mouth of the younger, still kept the other on the throat of the former, and her head under water. It was a desperate struggle, and the water splashed in every direction. He could feel that the old hag was fast

growing weaker, and as by this time the younger had partially recovered, he suddenly slipped his hand from her mouth to her throat, and the next instant she was submerged in the liquid element. But as she went under the second time, she slipped from his grasp, and floating beyond his reach, raised her head a few paces below him, still struggling, spurting the water from her mouth, and gasping for breath.

By this time Albert felt satisfied, by the relaxed exertions of the old woman, that she was too far gone to cause him any further apprehensions; and letting go his grasp, and allowing her body to float down with the current, he threw himself flat upon the bosom of the stream, and with three or four vigorous strokes of his muscular arms, quickly brought himself to the side of his other victim. Seizing her roughly, he was just in the act of forcing her under again, and for the last time—for now, having but one to contend with, there was no probability he would let her come to the surface again alive—when her lips parted, and the word, "Albert," half-gasped, half-spoken, was tremulously articulated.

Had the river suddenly vacated its bed or turned its waters in a contrary direction, our young hero could not have been more astonished and awe-struck, than he now was to hear his own name pronounced by a young squaw of the Hurons. Dropping his hold, he partially staggered back, and peered eagerly into her countenance. Then it was an expression swept over his own features impossible to be described. It was a curious mingling of horror, and joy, and awe; and so powerful were his feelings, that for some moments he could not speak. His eyes half-starting from

their sockets, were riveted upon the object before him, as if in her he had suddenly discovered a being from another world. At length, with a desperate effort, he rather gasped than said:

"Merciful God! Do my eyes deceive me, or is this my own beloved Forest Rose?"

"Albert! My own dear Albert!" was the half fainting response.

"God of mercy, it is so!" the young man almost shouted, wild with excitement, and the same moment his arm was thrown around her, and, half buried in the Hock-hocking, she was again strained to the breast of him who loved her.

Truly it was a strange meeting, after a long, and as each had believed, a final separation.

But there was no time for rejoicing now; though Albert beside himself with joy, seemed to forget the danger which menaced him on every side, and might have stood for minutes in speechless rapture, had not the voice of Rose suddenly recalled him from a mental heaven to a tangible earth.

"Quick! Dearest Albert!" she exclaimed hurriedly, "let us gain the shore and escape while we may, ere the alarm already sounded prove the means of surrounding us with Indians, and cutting off our retreat."

"You are right!" cried the other, starting, and looking wildly around him, "I had forgotten my danger in the transporting joy of meeting my own beloved Forest Rose! God send we may escape! Quick! quick! There—we are upon land once more," and as he spoke both emerged from the water upon the dry bank. "Follow me and not a word!" pursued Albert, springing forward and grasping his rifle.

"Albert! My own dear Albert!" was the half fainting response.

"Which way?" asked Rose, breathlessly.

"To the mount! To the mount! Our old friend, Lewis Wetzel, is there, awaiting my return."

Both now hurried forward, and turning the angle of the projecting hill, struck into the cover of the thicket. Gliding swiftly forward, but at the same time with as little noise as possible, they had gained some two hundred yards from the spring, when both were startled with a long, loud, peculiar whoop, coming from a party of Indians behind them, and echoing afar among the hills, with terrible distinctness.

"Oh, God! we are lost!" groaned Rose. "That is the mournful death howl of the Indians, and it will soon be followed by the terrible war-whoop, to give the alarm of danger. I understand it all. A party of hunters who went out this morning in this direction, have just discovered the body of the old woman. There! Hark!"

As she spoke, the regular war-whoop was sounded, sure enough, and ere its echoes had died away, it was again taken up by some stragglers at the nearest huts, and again at the village, and again on the plain, each renewal increasing the appalling sound by strength and numbers, till more than five hundred throats were joined in hellish concert.

"Quick, dearest!" cried Albert; "Quick, Rose! Fly, fly! Our only hope is in reaching the Standing Stone before we are surrounded. Great God! To die thus at last with happiness just within our grasp! Oh, it is terrible, terrible!" and, throwing an arm around the other's waist, he seemed to literally put in execution his command to her to fly, for her feet scarcely touched the ground, as both, regardless now of ex-

posure, strained every nerve to reach the mount, which loomed up before them within the distance of a quarter of a mile.

Yell upon yell now resounded from the plain, and then suddenly all became silent as death.

"Ah!" said Rose, "that silence is portentous—for by it I know that war parties are dividing, and darting off in every direction. There is no escape, dear Albert! But at least we may die together."

"Which I a thousand times prefer, dearest, to again being separated," was the affectionate response. "But we will not yield life without a struggle. Here we are now, at the base of the mount. Heaven grant we may reach the summit in safety, and then if the Indians get my scalp, they will the more readily prize it, as coming from one who made it cost the heart's blood of many of their nation. Quick, Rose! there! plant your foot there! now seize that limb! now cling to me! there, there, bravely done, we are ascending fast; a few minutes more and we shall join the old hunter. Hark, that shout shows that the Indians are behind us. They have surrounded the mountain; but press on, press on! Ah, thank God! Here we are at last at the foot of the precipice. Ha! I see Wetzel! He is reaching us a pole. Seize it, Rose, and cling to it —never mind me! Ah, I breathe again! Here we are at last." As the last words were uttered by Albert, he stood upon the summit of the rocks, with one arm thrown fondly around Rose, and panting hard from his exertions.

Wetzel stood just before him, and alternately looking at him and Rose, he at last exclaimed:

"Is this here an apperition? or is it little Rose

Forester sure enough? I see! I see now! It's the gal herself; but ef I know'd her in that squaw toggery, I wish I may be —— -blessed, I's a goin' to say. Thought you'd cotched a squaw prisoner, Albert, an' no mistake. I'm right glad to see you, gal; for Albert here has took on about losin' you harder nor a mule can kick; but I'm powerful sorry you come jest at the time when we're about to start on our last trail—for—"

"The Indians! The Indians!" interrupted Albert, hurriedly.

"Yes, that's jest what I's a goin' to say—for the Injins hev got us this time whar nothin' can save us. Well, we've got to die sometime, so I s'pose it don't make no great diff'rence—only I hate most powerful to gin 'em a chance to brag 'bout baggin' me at last."

"You think, then, there is no hope," cried Albert.

"No more nor ef you was tied to a stake, an' had a fire sot around ye. Look off thar on the plain, an' you'll see that the devil himself couldn't git past sich a crowd as is gatherin' around us. The whole mountain is surrounded by the cussed red howlin' imps, an' all we've got to do is knock over as many as we can, and then knock under ourselves."

"Oh, God! This is terrible!" said Rose, clinging closer to Albert. "As you say, to die at the very moment of happiness! But then," she added quickly, "we can die together, dear, dear Albert, and that will be a holy consolation."

"Nay, Rose," returned the young man, again straining her fondly to his heart. "I have been thinking that you may escape. There is no escape for us, it is true; but why should you die? Life has its

attractions for all; and it is cruel to sacrifice yours where nothing can be gained. I perceive by your dress and appearance that you have been adopted into the tribe. Go back to the Indians, and say you have been made a prisoner by the scouts, but managed to effect your escape. They will believe your story and their confidence in your fidelity will be increased; and at some future day you may be enabled to reach the settlements, where you will report that Lewis Wetzel and Albert Maywood died as heroes should, defending their position to the last drop of their hearts' blood. Go, dearest, go! and God Almighty bless and guard you!" and Albert pressed his lips hurriedly to those of Rose, and gently pushed her from him, as if to accelerate her movements before it should be too late.

But instead of complying with his request, Rose stood as one alarmed by some terrible thought, and gazed reproachfully at Albert, who felt at a loss to account for this singular expression of her features, unless it might be regret at leaving him behind. But time was pressing—for already the Indians were ascending the eastern acclivity—and fearful some accident might happen before she had made good her escape, he again urged her to go without delay. Poor little Rose, misconstruing his motive, burst into tears, and kneeling upon the rocks, she bowed her head forward in her hands, and murmured:

"Oh, God! Let me die where I am, since he whom I believed true loves me no longer."

"Rose! Rose!" cried Albert. "What means this?" Surely, surely, you cannot think thus basely of me!"

"Do you then love me still?" inquired Rose, simply and earnestly, looking up through her tears.

"Do I love you, dearest? What a question to ask at this time? How it pains me to hear, from your own sweet lips, you doubt me! Do I love you? Ay, better than my own life, since I would give my heart's blood to make you happy."

"Why, then, dear Albert, do you send me from you, never to meet again on earth?"

"Why, that you may not perish—that you may live to escape."

"And do you think I want to live when you are dead?" rejoined Rose, with energy. "Live! why should I live without you? I have no friends now—none to care for little Forest Rose. In you, dear Albert, is centered my whole being; and if God has decreed that you must die, oh! I beg of you, as the last favor I shall ever ask, to let me die with you! Let my bones whiten with yours, while together, hand in hand, we will traverse the unknown spirit land, loving on forever. Stir from here I will not, till you grant my prayer, even though I stand a breastwork between you and the foes; for the Indians are alike my foes and yours, and return to them alive I never will."

"God bless you for a noble girl!" exclaimed Albert, extending his arms, and the next moment clasping them around the form of her he loved. "We will die together, since you so wish it—but we must not die without a struggle! It was for your own dear sake that I wished to preserve your life, but since you prefer death with me to life without, I feel that I can throw off this mortal coil and murmur not. But

come, Rose, come! For the present I must conduct you to a safer spot, so that I can have the consolation of knowing I breathe my last breath in your defense."

"Give me a rifle," said Rose, resolutely, "and I will prove to you that I have not lived eighteen months among the savages for nothing."

"Nay, talk not thus, dearest, for every moment lost is an age of delay, and we have not the rifle to give. Quick! Follow me!" and Albert hurried over the rocks toward the retreat that had served himself and his companion for their night encampments.

"Ay, hurry away with the gal—hurry away with the gal!" said Wetzel, who had, during the conversation of the lovers, been watching the movements of the Indians; "for whatsomever powder we burn will hev to be burnt right sudden, for yonder the sneakin' cusses come, dodgin' about amongst the trees and rocks down yonder, as ef thar miserable lives war wuth as handsome as them o' two white gintlemen. Ha! thar's one pokin' his nose too nigh by. Up, old Killnigger, and gin him thunder!"

The last word was drowned in the sharp crack of a rifle followed by a yell of agony, and the adventurous savage, who had partly scaled the precipice, rolled down the hill, a hundred feet, mortally wounded by a ball which had been guided on its mission of death by the unerring eye of a true old marksman. A moment of breathless stillness succeeded the cry of the wounded Indian, and then arose a succession of terrific savage yells, which, beginning near the base of the precipice, spread away on every hand, completely surrounding the mount, echoing among

the more distant hills, and making the welkin ring with sounds worthy of a pandemonium.

The first blood had been drawn. The contest was truly begun.

Chapter XIX

FIVE HUNDRED AGAINST TWO

Scarcely had the savage shouts died away, when Albert, having seen Rose safely in her retreat, rejoined his companion, for the purpose of making good the defense as long as it might be possible for two human beings to hold out against five hundred war-trained, blood-thirsty savages. He found the old hunter standing between two high rocks, which guarded his person on two sides, and completely concealed him from the Indians on his right and left flank. In fact, there was no place where the savages could now bring their rifles to bear upon him, save directly in front, and even to do this, they must climb the rocks and make a foothold before they could shoot, and this, too, in the face of his own deadly weapon, which was not likely to remain idle, while its owner was being put in such jeopardy. Wetzel had improved the passing moments, since discharging his rifle, to reload it. Now he stood with the barrel of it resting in the hollow of his left arm, his right hand upon the breech and his right foot thrown a little back, ready to prove its fidelity upon the next Indian who might have the temerity to follow the example of the first by showing his painted face above the precipitous ascent in front.

"What of the attack?" inquired Albert, as he took

his place alongside of Wetzel, his own rifle being in position for immediate use.

"D'ye hear old Killnigger here speak to 'em?" replied Wetzel, giving vent to a low half-stifled chuckle. "Thunder! Ye oughter bin here, Master Albert, an' seed that thar devil roll down the rocks, all doubled up like he had the belly-ache! It was the purtiest sight I've seen for many a day, an' it done me a heap o' good to plug him plum center. I jest tell ye what 'tis, Master Albert, an' I can't help it—though I'll hev to allow it arn't in the common order o' things—but I've bin so long cooped up here, without doin' nothin', like a squirrel in a cage, that I like the fun o' knockin' over some o' these greasy cusses, jest to keep my hand in to the last. Ef we only had fifteen or twenty good old Injin fighters here now, to man every part o' these rocks, the red niggers mought work away, and be —— to 'em, till they got tired on't."

"But do you really think there is no chance for us to escape?" inquired Albert, anxiously.

Wetzel coolly turned his eyes up toward the sun, which, now a little past the meridian, was shining brightly down between two floating clouds, and, after considering for a moment or two, deliberately replied:

"Why, ef several things should come to pass, which it ain't much likely they will, we mought git off with two scalps on our heads an' one on the gal's, makin' three in all."

"Well, what must take place to render this possible?"

"Why, in the first place, the sun's more'n five hours above the horizon; an' till it gits down out o'

sight, two white gintlemen, as looks, for all human natur', exactly like me an' ye, hev got to keep five hundred o' the meanest, cowardest, greasiest lookin' set o' Satan's imps, as ever the Lord made, from gittin' on these here rocks an' sp'ilin' our handsomes. Ef we can do this, an' the night don't cloud up too much, it's maybe we can sneak down an' get away atween sun and sun."

"But do you really think we can hold out till night, my friend?"

"Ye mean ef I think so honestly?"

"I do."

"Well, then, I'll say, honestly, I don't. I wouldn't give that (snapping his finger) for our chance o' gittin' away. No, no, Master Albert, our time's come now, an' no mistake, an' all that's left us is to do our duty like white gintlemen, an' not disgrace our edication an' raisin'. I feel powerful sorry for the gal," pursued Wetzel, "an' I'd a felt much better, ef you'd a made out to hev persuaded her to go back to the Injins; though I can't say I think she's got much the worst on't, seein' they're sich a powerful mean set o' devils; but then I hate most desperate to see her with us, so young an' innocent like."

"It is terrible!" groaned Albert.

"By-the-by, I forgot to ax ye how ye came to find her. I hardly know'd her at first, with her colored skin that used to be so white, an' her dress, as is real squaw Injin all over."

"I will tell you all another time, that is, if God permits us to escape," replied Albert, hurriedly. "But look yonder!" and Albert pointed down the eastern side of the precipice. "See! the Indians are

skulking about among the rocks and trees, and we may prepare ourselves for a more desperate attack."

"Let 'em come," rejoined Wetzel as calmly as if he were examining the movements of a herd of deer. "Let 'em come! The first red ripscallion ās shows head above the rocks, will be powerful apt to git the contents o' old Killnigger into him."

An ominous silence succeeded this last remark of the old woodsman, during which both he and his companion kept their gaze riveted on the only point where it was believed the savages could ascend the precipice on which they stood. At the end of the rock, flanking the right of our scouts, a cluster of bushes had struggled up through a deep fissure, which served to screen them from the observation of the Indians, as the latter glided round in front on the hill below, while it left the savages exposed to view of our scouts, though the distance, and uncertainty of hitting their mark, prevented them from firing. Moment followed moment, and still the silence was as profound as if the forest contained not a single human being. But our scouts felt that this stillness was like that which precedes the tempest, or the opening roar of battle. From their knowledge of the Indian character, they knew that the savages were not idle, but preparing to give them a deadly surprise. The longer the silence, the more fearful were they of its being broken, at length, by the victorious war whoop. At last, cautioning Wetzel not to turn his eyes from the front, Albert stepped back a few paces, to be sure that none of the enemy had effected a lodgment behind their position—although from his knowledge of the rocks he believed

such a thing next to impossible, without the aid of artificial means, which he well knew the savages had not. Peering carefully around the outer angle of the eastern rock, he discovered, to use a nautical phrase, that the coast was clear. Satisfied with his scrutiny, he was just on the point of rejoining his companion when accidentally raising his eyes above the level of his head, he involuntarily started, and his features grew a shade more pale, while his grasp tightened on his rifle.

A few rods distant from the precipice, a tall pine had shot up some fifteen or twenty feet above the highest point of the mount, entirely free from limbs for some two-thirds of the whole length. Close against the body of this tree, on the opposite side to Albert, supported by the first crotch, and almost entirely concealed by the foliage of a limb projecting toward our young hunter, was a dark object, which the quick eyes of Albert readily detected to be an Indian. During the silence he had been stealthily climbing, taking his rifle with him, and at the moment when Albert looked around the angle of the rock, he had just reached his present position, when, perceiving the young hunter he suspended his operations and remained immovable, in the hope of escaping observation.

From where our gallant scouts had been standing, it was impossible to discover the Indian, owing to the height of the rock on that side, and his intention clearly was to ascend to a point whence he could look down on the hunters, and pick one of them off with a fatal aim. At this moment, as if aware this bold design was in danger of being frustrated, the savages

below made some slight demonstrations in front, as if to attract the attention of the scouts in that direction. But if such was their object, it failed with Albert. He saw at a glance the narrow escape himself and companion had made, in feeling themselves too secure against an attack from the rear. Albert was resolved not to withdraw his gaze even for a moment, from the tree, till he had rid it of so dangerous an enemy. But a very small portion of the body of the savage was visible, and this so shaded by intervening foliage as to render it an uncertain shot for the very best marksman. In consequence, Albert stood irresolute for a moment, whether to fire or retreat behind the rock and await a more favorable opportunity. But while considering, he mechanically raised his rifle to his eye, and glanced along the barrel. At the same moment a cloud moved along between him and the sun and made the light favorable to a certain aim. The chance seemed too good to be thrown away, for it was doubtful if he ever could get one better, so he pulled the trigger. Crack went the rifle, and, bounding clear from the tree, with a horrible yell of pain and rage, the savage made several evolutions in his descent, and striking his head at last upon a rock, dashed out his brains at a spot near where some of his companions were concealed, watching the success of his daring adventure. At the same instant the rifle of the old hunter belched forth its deadly contents, and another savage, who had ventured to peer above the rocks in front of Wetzel, rolled howling down the rugged pathway.

A general yell of rage and dismay now arose from

more than a hundred throats at the foot of the precipice on the eastern side, and, being taken by others more distant, again made the welkin ring as with the orgies of fiends. Maddened to fury at the failure and death of their companions, and knowing that the rifles of the scouts must now be empty, some fifty Indians rushed forward in a body, and attempted to clamber up the rock together. But numbers only increased the difficulty of ascent and caused a delay which enabled Wetzel and Albert to be again prepared to give them a warm reception.

"Don't let's waste no more powder nor is necessary," said Wetzel, coolly, stopping to pick up a good-sized stone that lay at his feet. "Now keep your eye skinned," he added, as he crept stealthily forward, "and be sure, ef I miss the first red nigger as shows himself, to drap him right sudden yourself."

Having delivered himself of this peculiar caution, he continued his progress in silence, until within a couple of feet of where the Indians were climbing up one after another. Then suddenly raising himself to his feet, he hurled the stone with all his might upon the heads of those below. Had a cannon ball swept down there, it would have failed to clear the path much sooner than did this missile of the hunter. Fairly striking the head of the foremost, it crushed in his skull and spattered his brains on those below; and then, impelled downward by its weight, and the impetus given it by two muscular arms, it rolled with fearful velocity from one to another, crushing and mangling whatever it touched having animal life. Surprised, bruised, and terrified, the foremost savages let go their hold, and, falling back upon their

companions, the whole party, yelling and screeching, went tumbling down together, like so many footballs, till their progress became checked by the trees and rocks which they spotted with their own blood.

Wetzel ventured to peep over the precipice one moment, to learn the success of his experiment; and then hurrying back to Albert, he threw himself down upon the rock, and rolling over and over, with his hands clasped on his sides, indulged himself in a hearty fit of merriment, that threatened to unfit him for any further service—actually breaking out into roars of laughter, but little less far reaching than the yells of his enraged enemies.

"The cusses," he cried, as soon as he could get breath enough to speak; "jest to see 'em tumblin' one on top o' t'other, an' t'other on top o' one, cl'ar down to the bottom!" And again he gave vent to his feelings in a roar that would have done no discredit to a wounded buffalo.

"Is this a time to laugh?" returned Albert, rather indignantly, who could see nothing to excite his mirth, while his dearly beloved Rose was in danger.

"Sartin it is," replied Wetzel, taking a sitting posture, with his hands crossed over his knees, and giving Albert a serio-comic look. "Sartin it is a time to laugh, and the only one maybe I'll ever hev; for it's my opine that when them thar devils git over the flurry that thar rock put 'em into, we'll hev a powerful short time to say our prayers in. Wonder what's their opine o' how a white gintleman can handle a rock? Oh, it was enough to make a bar laugh, jest to see how they piled 'emselves up down thar, arter

I draped that thar last argument for thar partikelar edification."

Here Wetzel indulged in another long convulsive fit of merriment, and then, thinking it time to be again in readiness for a new onset, he rose to his feet, seized his rifle, and resumed his former position of defense.

Again a long, portentous silence prevailed, during which nothing could be heard but the rustling of the withering leaves, as a light breeze from the west stole through the forest. An hour had elapsed since the first attack upon our scouts, and still they had been able to maintain their position, which was certainly more than they had counted on doing an hour before, and it gave them a faint hope that they might possibly hold till night.

Another hour rolled away, and although they had been constantly on the watch, not a living being had they seen. There was something awful in the long suspension of hostilities—something far more terrifying than actual combat—for now the mind had nothing to distract it from their appalling situation, and imagination was free to conjure up a thousand horrors. The effect of this suspense began to be visible even on the intrepid Wetzel. His features had assumed a sullen gravity; his dark eyes wandered from object to object, with a restlessness uncommon; his grasp tightened on his rifle; his breathing grew slightly irregular, while cold drops of perspiration stood on his immobile features. Albert appeared calm, but it was the solemn melancholy calmness of one who was looking death in the face and mentally preparing himself for the last great change. All

color had forsaken his features, and even his compressed lips were bloodless. Still, there was no foolish trepidation—no cowardly fear apparent. He might die, but his whole appearance betokened one who would die as became a hero.

"I don't like it," said Wetzel, at length, drawing a long breath. "This here kind o' fightin' whar a feller's got nothin' to do, is the worst kind o' fightin' out. Now anybody that know'd nothin' about Injins might think, maybe, as how they'd drawed off to let us alone—but we know better. They're up to some infernal devilment, which we'll be powerful apt to hear on when we least expect to. Well, ef they'd only come along, an' let us hev the wust on it; but this keepin' a couple o' white gintlemen cooped up here to fool away thar time, is outrageous.

"They know we can not escape," returned Albert, "and so with a species of refined cruelty, they deliberate and carry out their plans coolly, leaving us to a suspense worse a hundred times than actual death. But I will go and seek Rose—for she must feel terribly, poor girl! In fact, I wonder she has remained so long in quiet, though I earnestly requested her not to stir from her hiding place till I gave permisison."

"Well, I can't stand this," rejoined the old hunter, "for I'd a powerful sight rather—"

"Hist!" interrupted Albert, in a whisper, touching his shoulder and, silently pointing toward the southern end of the precipice, or that opposite the regular place of ascent.

Wetzel turned his eyes in that direction, and from the center of a cluster of bushes, which grew upon

the very edge of the eastern side of the rocks, fancied he saw the dark eyes of a savage, gleaming like those of a panther. Glad of any excuse to relieve the tedium of monotonous suspense, he brought his rifle to his eye, with the air of one who was merely about to sight for amusement, and instantly the echoes of the forest were awakened by a sharp report, followed by a yell of agony, as a savage bounded up from his cover, and plunged headlong down the precipice. The usual yells of rage and dismay next succeeded from the companions of the wounded Indian. To the surprise and almost consternation of our scouts, three more athletic warriors started up from the same cover, and discharging their rifles at our spies, happily without effect, gave the appalling war-whoop, and, flourishing their tomahawks above their heads, rushed down upon them.

But our gallant hunters were prepared to receive them. Deliberately raising his rifle to his eye, Albert shot the foremost directly through the heart, and as he fell back upon the next behind, both our friends sprang forward for a hand-to-hand combat. But it was of only momentary duration. Bounding to the side of the second savage, as he was in the act of disengaging himself from his dead companion, Albert raised his tomahawk at the same time with the Indian; but being quicker in motion than his antagonist, he managed to elude his blow and bury his own weapon in the other's head. Wetzel was alike successful. A perfect demon when fighting savages, he sprang forward with a yell of fury, like a tiger bounding upon his prey, fairly gnashing his teeth and foaming at the mouth, and seizing the uplifted arm

that held a tomahawk, he suspended the blow, while he plunged his knife to the very haft in the Indian's heart. Then drawing it forth, he caught the latter by the scalp lock and running his knife around the crown tore off the scalp, and with a vigorous kick sent the bloody carcass down the rocks.

It is useless to think of conveying to the reader anything more than a faint idea of the scene of savage rage that followed the reception of the scalpless carcass by the Indians who were standing near the base of the rocks where it fell. Yell upon yell, more hideous, if anything, than any our scouts had before heard, greeted its descent; and scarcely had these begun to subside, when the two others, alike scalpless, were hurled after it by Wetzel, as if in defiance. This was more than savage nature could stand. Rushing to the spot where their late companions had ascended, by means of the trunk of a tree which had been placed against the mural surface of the rocks, they strove to clamber up.

Meantime the savages in front had not been idle. While the fight, which we have recorded, and which was only momentary, had been going on, several swarthy figures had effected a lodgment on the top of the precipice. Our gallant scouts were first warned of the fact by a simultaneous discharge of five or six rifles, the balls of which came whizzing past, three of them actually cutting the clothes of Albert, who, at that moment was the only one exposed. Wetzel, having completed the act of hurling down the scalpless bodies of the Indians, was concealed by the rock forming the eastern side of the pass.

"To cover! To cover!" shouted Albert. "One more

desperate resistance before we are silenced forever!" and seizing Wetzel's rifle, he bounded to the side of the western rock, where he was immediately joined by the other. "Quick!" pursued our young hero, "quick, Wetzel! Load these rifles while I guard this outlet;" and he took his station close to the opening of the rocks through which the savages must pass to get at him.

Fortunately, the good foresight of Colonel Martin had supplied him with a brace of pistols, and drawing these from his belt, he stood ready to shoot down the first who should project his body beyond the angle of the rock. He had not long to await a trial of their efficiency, for, believing they had now nothing to do but rush forward and overpower their victims with numbers, the Indians, dropping their firearms as useless, sprang forward, with exulting yells of savage delight. But their tune was soon changed to one of wailing and dismay, for the first two that bounded through the opening were shot down instantly. At the same moment, another savage, who was just in the act of clambering over the verge of the precipice on the eastern side, received the contents of Wetzel's reloaded rifle and fell back on his companions.

The report of three pieces, where they had supposed but two, and neither of these loaded, struck a thrill of dismay into the hearts of the superstitious Indians, almost equal to what would have been caused by the explosion of a bomb in their midst. Either the white men must be sorcerers, they reasoned, or else their numbers were far superior to what they had believed them to be. In either case greater caution than they had hitherto displayed in an attack, seemed requisite

to succeed; and hastily retreating, so as to cover themselves by the opposite ends of the rocks already frequently mentioned, the party on the precipice called a hurried council of war, during which they were joined by as many from below as could find foothold on their limited portion of the summit of the Standing Stone.

This was a cessation of hostilities not to be neglected by our scouts, and every moment was improved in getting themselves in readiness for a new onset. Hurriedly reloading their rifles and pistols, and managing to get hold of two more pieces which had belonged to the slain, they reloaded these also, and then sought out the best point to station themselves for a last resistance. They soon discovered a place near the southern end of the rocks where they could command the whole front, and where they would be perfectly secure against the rifles of the Indians, till the latter should reach a little open space to their left—but which could only be done by passing singly between two rocks, where for a moment, a small portion of each one's person must be exposed—or, by clambering over the rock, which would leave them more exposed still. Here they were resolved to sell their lives dearly, all hopes of escape having long since expired; for they could only leave their present position directly in the face of their foes who now commanded the whole northern part of the precipice.

"Alas, Rose!" said Albert, in a low tone, for he was now within a few feet of where he had concealed the idol of his affections, but whom he had not since ventured to visit. "Alas! Rose, there is no hope for us now! Say your prayers, dearest, and be ready to

join me in the spirit-land. Pray for me also, will you, loved one? For in the heat of strife, I shall have no time to think of the spirit's flight."

To this affectionate and mournful appeal there was no response, and after listening for a few moments, Albert again spoke.

"Rose! Rose!" he called. "Why don't you answer me? Rose, my own Forest Rose! Speak or I shall fancy something terrible has happened to you."

Still no answer.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed the terrified lover. "Perhaps she is dead; murdered by these hellish savages!" and regardless of the risk he ran, he started from his place of defense, and, leaping over the rocks, sprang down into the retreat where he had left her.

But she was nowhere to be seen.

"Gone! gone!" he cried, wringing his hands in agony, as he peered under the rock, and over the brow of the precipice, half in fear and expectation of beholding her lovely form lying mangled on the stone below. "Ah!" he said mournfully, as a new thought crossed his mind. "I see it all now! Poor Rose! The thought of death was too much for thee, and thou hast rejoined the Indians, that thy life may be spared a few years longer. Well, well, perhaps it is for the best; though, somehow, the thought of dying with thee had come to be a pleasant one. Well, God bless thee, dear one, and let thee live on to thy appointed hour! Thou wilt find another, perhaps, should'st thou escape, more worthy of thee than I; thou wilt never—no, never—find one to love thee so truly and devotedly. Farewell, Rose! and if my

memory is worth a tear, oh, shed it above my remains, that they may be hallowed by an angel's regard!"

This soliloquy of Albert was here closed by the sharp crack of a rifle and the loud yells of infuriated savages.

Chapter XX

THE MYSTERIOUS MARKSMAN

While Albert was searching for Rose, the council of the Indians closed, with the decision to make a new onset upon their intended victims, and forthwith they proceeded to put their design in execution. Gliding stealthily between the rocks, to the number of some eight or ten, they suddenly sprang through on the other side, where they still believed the scouts were concealed, when, to their surprise, they discovered that the latter were gone. Knowing they could not have quitted the mount, at least by any natural agency, they eagerly commenced searching for them among the rocks and bushes, but at the same time most warily, so as not to be taken too much by surprise themselves. In this search, one or two of them unconsciously got within the range of Wetzel's rifle. The old woodsman, never failing to improve an opportunity for lessening the number of his enemies, took a deliberate aim and pulled the trigger. An athletic young savage bounded up some four feet and fell back a corpse, and his death-yell was re-echoed by the others, who pressed forward to the spot where they had seen the smoke ascend, in the hope of conquering at last by a coup de main.

Fearful for the fate of himself and friend by his own imprudence, Albert now strove to recover the advantage he had lost by a daring movement. Leaping

boldly from his covert upon the rocks, in full view of the yelling savages, he darted before their astonished eyes like a meteor, and the next moment amid a shower of rifle bullets, which flew harmlessly past him, he gained a position by the side of the old hunter, and again seized his well-tried rifle. This feat, though a most dangerous one to practice, proved in the end of infinite advantage to our friends. The simultaneous discharge of their firearms, now left the savages exposed to a bolder aim from our scouts, who failed not to improve so important an opportunity. Stepping from their ambush, both leveled their rifles and fired at the same moment, and two of the foremost fell mortally wounded. This alarmed the others, who turned and fled in confusion, with the exception of two, who, loath to leave their companions in the power of the enemy, ran up to them, and stooped down to raise the bodies. Wetzel, divining their intentions, sprang back a couple of paces, caught up the other rifle and shot one of them through the head. Uttering a terrible yell of dismay, the other bounded away and disappeared, while Wetzel, bent on following up his good fortune, though at a fearful risk to himself, whipped out his knife, flew over the rocks, and in less time than it has taken us to record the act, actually scalped the wounded, within full view of more than fifty savages, and rejoined his companion unharmed, bearing with him three more firearms.

By this time the Indians had become disheartened to a degree that would never have been thought possible, considering their number and those of our scouts. Five hundred against two! "What an

absurdity," says the reader, "to think of the stronger party, and these, too, well-trained savage warriors, being disheartened in their attempts to overpower the weaker." But of what use were numbers where numbers could not be employed to advantage? The position of our scouts was such, that only one could approach them at a time, in a way to dislodge them; and against one the rifle of one was just as good as five hundred against five hundred. Perhaps, in the whole Western country, at that period, no other place could have been found, either natural or artificial, where two men could have kept at bay such a host of warriors for such a length of time. Had it been a fort, the latter could have scaled the walls, demolished, or burned it—but here they seemed to labor in vain. More than two hours had elapsed since the commencement of the siege, and yet the scouts were if anything more secure than ever. With the Indians some ten or twelve of their bravest warriors had been killed outright, and several others disabled by serious wounds.

But just in proportion as the Indians felt disheartened in their attempts to dislodge our heroes, just in that proportion rose the spirits of the latter. Their success so far in defending themselves had exceeded their most sanguine expectations. The last retreat of the enemy, at the very moment when they were about to give up all for lost—and only held out that they might die in their tracks, without being taken prisoners, rather than with any expectation of proving victorious—this last retreat of the enemy, we say, under such circumstances, served to inspire them with a confidence and hope that they had not experienced

since the first yell of the foe had warned them that their visit to the country was known.

"Ef we can only hold out a two hours longer, it's my opine we can cheat the yellin' hell-hounds out o' our scalps yit," observed Wetzel, looking up at the sun and clouds.

"But is it possible for us, in the first place, to hold out two hours?" inquired Albert.

"Why, I don't know anything why we shouldn't," answered the other. "Ye see thar's a good many things in our favor jest now. In the first place, we've held out two hours an' more, right agin the most powerful sarcumventions of the hull body o' the red ripscallions; an' what's more on our side, we've picked too many scalpfeathers off o' thar greasy pates to make 'em too car'less 'bout what's left. Now ye see the great p'int is, we've made 'em car'ful, an' that's one o' the greatest things for us as could a happened; for as long's they're car'ful, we're safe. The only way to git us out o' here is to rush one arter t'other till we wouldn't hev time to load, course, they don't know we got all these extry guns. But in doin' this, ye see, the cusses know as how it'll be sartin death to the first five or six, an' as long's they really think that's the case we're purty tolerable safe; for the bravest greasy face 'mongst 'em is a powerful coward, when it comes to runnin' right agin a sartin bullet. No, ye see, they'll be tryin' agin to sneak 'round an' sarcumvent us. In doin' this they give us time; an' afore they know it it'll be night. But what's better for us nor all the rest, they believe it's onpossible for us to git away no how, an' by guardin' the mountain close they're sure to

starve us out; so they won't be powerful apt to run no more personal risks nor they can conveniently help."

"Again," said Albert, "provided we hold out till night, do you think we can pass the sentinels without being detected?"

"Well, thar's whar I think the tight place comes, arter all," returned the other. "Ef it should happen to be light enough so as we could tell a red nigger from a tree six feet off, I think it's maybe, with great car' we mought—though I'll hev to allow it'll be powerful unsartin business even then; but ef it should cloud up an' rain, an' be dark as the d---l—jest as I think it's goin' to be—we hain't got much chance, for we'll be more like to run plum gin some cuss, nor we will to miss the hull on 'em."

"Oh, would to God that Rose had remained with us, since there is even a bare hope of escape!" said Albert, despondently. "Strange that she should depart, without even a farewell. Ah, me! since I know she lives, should I ever escape myself, I shall be more miserable than ever, till she be set free from these accursed beings. But how to accomplish it is more than I can tell at present, unless we can ransom or lie in wait and entrap her, for it would be impossible to take her by force from a nation that has five hundred warriors ready for battle."

"Well, well, let us git up an' git away first an' talk o' that arterwards," observed Wetzel. "To git cl'ar o' these hell-hounds is the most important matter to be thought on now. I'm powerful sorry, as things hev turned out, that the gal left on your account,

but it can't be helped, an' I s'pose she know'd her own business best—leastwise she'd oughter."

The conversation here dropped again, and Albert relapsed into that stern, melancholy mood which had characterized him since the first attack of the savages. From their present position, concealed as they were from their foes in front, by a breastwork of stone, and a dense cluster of shrubbery, it was impossible for the Indians on the precipice to dislodge them, only in the manner in which Wetzel had pointed out to his companion. As this would be attended with a certain loss of some five or six lives, it was not likely to be attempted for the present; though the utmost vigilance, on the part of the scouts, was requisite to guard against a sudden surprise. But although so well protected in front, they soon discovered they were far less secure than they had thought themselves, should an attack in the rear and front be made simultaneously. Their position was on the very verge of the western side or end of the Standing Stone. Behind them, to the right and left, were a couple of rocks, that would shield them from the oblique aim of everyone below. But between these rocks was an opening that left their persons completely exposed whenever they kept upon the safest point to protect themselves from an attack in front. For a hundred feet below them, the descent was perpendicular, and then the remainder of the distance to the foot of the hill was somewhat sloping—though, for a considerable way hardly enough so to render an ascent to the foot of the rocks on which they stood an easy matter. But from nearly every point of the hill they could conceal themselves. In fact, there was

but one spot about, within rifle distance, from which it was impossible to interpose a barrier between themselves and a rifle-bullet. The point alluded to was a high rock, which rose out of the bed of a ravine, at the distance perhaps of a hundred yards. Around the base of this solitary rock, on every side, flourished a thicket of hazel, so dense that a human being might lie concealed in it and not be detected by another at the distance of a half a dozen feet. The summit of this rock, which rose high above the banks of the ravine, commanded the position of our scouts, and a keen marksman, standing upon it, could easily pick them off, one at a time—more especially, if a fierce attack from the top of the precipice should prevent them from retreating behind the rocks before mentioned as standing to the right and left of the rear center.

A spot so advantageous for a rear attack could not of course be long kept from the knowledge of an enemy so well skilled in warfare as the Hurons, and the moment our scouts perceived it, which they did soon after the close of the last conversation, they felt their hopes sink somewhat in the proportion they had risen a few minutes before.

"It's a powerful ugly thing," observed Wetzel, looking toward it, and speaking the thoughts uppermost in his mind. "It's a powerful ugly thing, and takes off a good deal from our chance o' safety."

"It is possible," replied Albert, who felt loath to relinquish the hope of escape he had before entertained. "It is possible, you know, that the savages may not attempt a front and rear attack at the same time, and if they do not, we are safe against either."

"Don't you believe it, Master Albert. Jest let the scamps alone for any devilment as may turn up. Ef they don't diskiver that now, they hain't Injins, an' hain't got as much sense as a terrier pup. No, no—don't go fer to think they won't diskiver it, an' do the dirty thing o' takin' on us on both sides at onc't—case ef ye do, ye'll be powerful disapp'inted, that's all."

"And if they do, is there no way to ward off the blow?"

"It won't be no blow," answered the other, who put a literal construction on the question of his companion. "No, no—it won't be no blow—it'll be a regular shoot, ye may depind, an' the skunk as fires'll hev to know somethin' 'bout burnin' powder at that to hit his mark at this here distance."

"But can we not interpose a barrier between us and the rock?"

"Interpose the d---l!" replied the other. "Whar be we to git the rocks an' things to do it with? No, no—all the barrier we can interpose'll be a rifle-bullet in the head o' the first cuss as shows his greasy face up thar."

"Well, well, at all events, we will do the best our circumstances will permit—and for the rest we must trust to Providence," rejoined Albert, gloomily.

For another hour our scouts remained unmolested, and then, pointing to the rocks before him, Wetzel observed:

"Git your rifle ready, lad, for the Injins is a comin' agin, an' from all I know on 'em, I 'spect it'll be powerful warm work."

Albert looked in the direction indicated by the other

and perceived the truth of his companion's words. The Indians were approaching, sure enough—but with great caution, and keeping as much as possible behind the rocks, so as not to be exposed to a fatal aim. At length having reached the avenue through which only one could pass at a time to reach the open space where they could easily dislodge the scouts, they suddenly darted forward, in the hope of getting through unharmed.

But in this they were mistaken, for both our scouts stood ready. The instant a small portion of the body of the foremost became visible to the eye of Wetzel, his finger pressed upon the trigger of his never-failing rifle. The report, and the yell of the wounded savage together, awoke the echoes of the mount, and reverberated among the more distant hills with startling distinctness. Nothing daunted, apparently, by this, the savage next behind pressed forward, in the hope of being more successful, and received the contents of Albert's rifle in his abdomen. A third and a fourth made the attempt with like failure, for the moment our scouts had discharged their own pieces they caught up those they had taken from the enemy, and fired them in quick succession.

Had a few more savages instantly attempted the pass, they might have been successful, and the contest might have been speedily decided. But fortunately, the savages did not know this, and the loss of four of their bravest warriors, in quick succession, produced a terrible consternation among the others, and caused a check to their progress, long enough to enable our gallant friends to reload the discharged weapons.

Finding their efforts to succeed so far had totally

failed, two of the most daring of the party now threw themselves flat upon the lower rock, and attempted to crawl through the opening, while the others set up a series of horrible yells, for the purpose of directing the attention of the scouts from this maneuver. Justice compels us to say it was on the point of being a successful one, for anticipating a renewal of the attack in the usual manner, our scouts were looking only for the upright body of an Indian for a target, and mistook the dark mass lower down for a shadow of the rock, which it really resembled; but, chancing to give it a moment's attention, Wetzel fancied he saw it move, and perfectly familiar with Indian stratagem, the truth flashed upon him at once. To sight his rifle and discharge it was the work of a single instant, and to his great delight, but not contrary to his expectations, a savage sprung up with a howl of pain, and darted back to his companions.

At the same moment that Wetzel fired, Albert, who had often during the attack cast furtive glances toward the isolated rock already mentioned, now looked again in that direction, and, to his great dismay, beheld the swarthy figure of an Indian creeping from the thicket, and preparing to leap upon it from the highest point of the bank of the ravine. It was a painful moment to him, for, should the savage reach the rock, it would be certain death to both Wetzel and himself, as the Indian could easily hide on the other side, and while the attention of the scouts was directed to the front attack, could pick them off with a deliberate aim. While on the other hand, should he venture to fire upon the savage before

his companion's rifles were again reloaded, there was an equal chance of a renewed attack in front being successful. It was an almost hopeless case, take it which way he would, but there was no time for deliberation, and so his resolution was quickly formed.

Bidding Wetzel make all the haste he could, he stepped quickly behind the rock, and resting his rifle upon it, shaded the sight with his hand, and drew a bead upon the small portion of the Indian's body that was visible through the thicket. Although the distance was a full hundred yards, Albert now felt certain that his aim would tell, and holding his breath, under a peculiar excitement, he pulled the trigger. Down came the hammer upon the pan, but instead of the report he expected to hear, the flint was crushed into a dozen fragments, and the rifle remained undischarged.

"Ah! fatal accident!" murmured Albert, as he deliberately proceeded to adjust another flint, although he well knew, from the posture of the Indian, that he would spring and reach the rock before this could be effected.

He had just succeeded in getting the second flint secured, and was in the act of running his eye along the barrel, when the Indian made a desperate spring; but, instead of reaching the rock, to the surprise of Albert he leaped some ten feet into the air, and, uttering a yell of agony, fell back upon the bank, and rolled over and over until he reached the bottom of the ravine, where he remained motionless, as if dead. At the same moment, the report of a rifle reached him, and a light smoke curled upward from the

thicket on the opposite side of the rock. Here was mystery indeed! The Indian had met his death by an unknown hand; but who it was that had given this friendly aid, was more than Albert could divine.

But no time was given him for speculation on the subject, for, at the instant the report reached him from below, the crack of Wetzel's rifle, which had been reloaded, warned him of the danger close at hand. Turning suddenly around, his eye, accidentally caught sight of the head of a savage peering above the rock, through the bushes at the point to the right, already mentioned as the one to which the Indians had made access by the trunk of a tree. Without a moment's hesitation, he sighted his rifle as if to shoot a flying deer, and fired. The usual yell of agony, accompanied with the sudden disappearance of the head told him unequivocally that he had not missed his mark.

The Indians now drew off for another consultation. The sun was almost down ere they returned to the attack, which they did at last with more fury than ever, determined to succeed, even at a heavy sacrifice of life. But our scouts had meantime reloaded all their weapons, and, as fast as one made his body visible, he received the leaden messenger of death, and fell back. Four were thus shot down in almost as many seconds, but still others pressed forward, and, as their best weapons had given out, our scouts now felt that their time had truly come. Five stalwart savages, the bravest of the band, now darted through the opening, one after the other, and stood upon the open space in full view. Believing the worst of the danger over, each one flourished his

tomahawk, and all sprang forward in a body, uttering yells of triumph.

Suddenly the thought of the discarded muskets occurred to Wetzel; and instantly seizing them, he handed one to Albert, and, in a tone of voice scarcely less savage than their own, shouted:

"Gin 'em h--l!"

It needed no second prompting for Albert to do his best, and, cocking the musket with his thumb, while his forefinger rested on the trigger, he discharged it full in the breast of the foremost Indian, who was just in the act of hurling his tomahawk at his head. The savage bounded up some four feet, and fell back upon his companion, fairly gnashing his teeth with disappointed vengeance. Wetzel fired at the same moment, with equal success, and, clubbing his rifle, with a howl of fury that might be likened to that of a madman, he struck the third savage over the head with its breech, actually beating out his brains with a single blow on the spot where he stood. Albert, not to be behind in the fray, threw his musket at the fourth, drew a pistol, bounded up to him, and, quick as lightning, shot him through the breast. The remaining savage, amazed and terror-struck at what he had witnessed, made no demonstration of violence, but turned with a yell, and bounded over the rocks, as fast as his legs, impelled by fear, could carry him. At the same moment, Albert chanced to look toward the rock below, and beheld another savage just in the act of leaping upon it. But he could do nothing now, for not a single rifle was loaded, and, touching Wetzel on the shoulder, he silently pointed to the dangerous object. Both fixed their eyes upon the savage, and at

that moment he made the leap. More successful than his predecessor, he fairly landed upon the rock; but his triumph was of short duration; for ere he had taken a step forward, he suddenly sprang up some two feet, and turning a backward somersault, plunged headlong down into the ravine. Again a light smoke exactly as before, was seen curling upward from the bushes, and the sound of a rifle reached the ears of our friends, together with the yells of a hundred savages further down the hill, who had witnessed the fall of one renowned in exploits, the Indian brave, Ogwehea.

"Who can be that mysterious marksman," observed Albert, "to whom we have twice been indebted for our lives? Can it be possible that there is another white hunter so near us, or that we have an unknown friend among the savages?"

"Thar you have me," replied Wetzel, "for you've axed a question as I can't answer. But whomsoever he is, redskin or white, he'll find one white gintleman in this coon as won't fergit him in a hurry. But look! We're saved!" and Wetzel pointed to the West, where the sun was just setting behind a heavy cloud, whose upper edges were beautifully belted with gold.

"Ah, yes, we are saved! Would to God that Rose were with us!" was the mournful response of Albert, as, leaning upon his rifle, he gazed sadly toward the West, and brushed a tear of grief and gratitude from his eye.

Chapter XXI

THE LOST ONE FOUND

The surmises of our scouts, that the Indians would make no further attack upon them that night, proved correct; and when they exclaimed that they were saved, they had especial reference to this only. For well they knew the danger that must still attend them, should they attempt to descend the mount, and pass the guard that completely surrounded it. Still it was a great relief to know that they would have a few hours of security, in which to rest from the fatigues and excitement of the day, and mature their plans for subsequent proceedings.

"It is a goin' to be a bad night for us, Master Albert," observed the old hunter, carefully examining the heavens. "It's a goin' to do jest what I's afeared it would do, cloud up as dark as a stack o' black niggers. Well, we must do the best we can, an' ef we git captur'd at last, it won't be no more'n we counted on for sartin some hours ago."

"I cannot think," rejoined Albert, "that we have been so miraculously preserved through the dangers of the day, to fall into the hands of the Philistines at last—it seems almost against reason. Oh, that Rose were here now!" he exclaimed, with a sigh, seating himself upon a rock, and bowing his forehead upon his hand.

"Poor feller!" muttered Wetzel, "that thar gal

business'l be the death on him yit. Now, ef it was me, and she wanted to run away, as she did from him, I'd jest let her go, an' be —— to her. I hain't got much belief in women, nohow; an' the woman as fools me onc't, has done somethin' she can't do over agin, ef she tries all her life. Now, I'll bet a powder horn agin a gun-flint, that thar same gal has fell in love with some big, greasy, red nigger, an', arter throwin' sand in Albert's eyes, an' makin' him think as how she still loves him, she's jest up and gone back to t'other. Else what did she make such a powerful fuss about his wantin' her to go back fer, an' arter agreein' to stay an' die with him, put out the minute he got his back turned on her! Women, poh! thar never oughter bin none on 'em made; for they're jest good for nothin' but to torment a white gintleman's life out on him, that's a fact."

While uttering or rather grumbling out this soliloquy, Wetzel had been steadily at work reloading his rifles. As soon as the last charge was rammed home, he took his seat on the same rock with Albert, a few feet distant, and silently contemplated the heavens. By this time, the sun had fairly set, and deepening shadows of twilight were fast spreading over plain and forest, and giving to objects that vague, misty, indistinct appearance peculiar to the shutting in of night, or the opening of day. The cloud behind which the sun had set was gradually rising above, and spreading along the horizon, while the clouds of lesser magnitude were floating about in the heavens—but slowly gathering together, and uniting—betokening that ere long a heavy pall would be spread between the earth and the stars, and every

ray of light which mortal eye is formed to distinguish be cut off. From the heavens, Wetzel turned his gaze to earth, and rising he approached the front of the Standing Stone, and looked down upon the plain that lay immediately beneath him. Here he occasionally perceived a dusky figure stalking about in the uncertain light, and presently could faintly distinguish parties of warriors, at a greater distance, returning to the village from the unsuccessful attack upon himself and companion, not unfrequently bearing with them dark, heavy, motionless objects, which he rightly conjectured were the bodies of their companions who had fallen in the strife.

Half an hour passed away, and by this time the light had so faded, that no portion of the plain was visible; but looking down from the height on which he stood, it appeared like a dark, bottomless gulf. Returning to his companion, he said:

"Come, Albert, it's time that we was beginnin' to lay our plans, even ef we don't put 'em in practice for an hour to come."

Albert who, during the period mentioned, remained as we have described him, with his head bowed upon his hand, lost in a painful reverie, now looked up, as one suddenly awakened from sleep, and sighing heavily, replied:

"I scarcely care what becomes of me now, my friend, since she, whom I believed would be true under all circumstances, has seen proper to forsake me in the hour of peril."

"Nay, lad, this here's right down foolish," rejoined the other, "an' not a bit like what you oughter be. Come, come, never mind! Ef the gal's found any-

body as she likes better, let her go. Thar's plenty other gals in the world as good as she is, ef you only think so; but ef it was my case, I wouldn't hev nothin' to do with none on 'em, for thar hain't no more gratitude nor love in 'em, nor thar is in so many painters."

"Talk not thus, Wetzel—talk not thus!" was the mournful but rather energetic response. "You know not, my friend, how your words harrow up my feelings! I may bear up against the thought that Rose is dead, or that we are separated never to meet again on earth—for this I have borne—though not without deep sorrow, I will admit; but the thought that she has proved untrue to me—that she has voluntarily forsaken me, and for another; has broken her plighted faith—I could not endure and long survive. Call me foolish, if you will; I care not. It is my nature and I cannot help it. Never was there a being on earth more truly and devotedly loved than she. From our youth up, we were companions and playmates, and never was there a joy or sorrow that either had before our separation, but was shared with the other.

"Possessing strong passions myself, she grew to be the idol of my thoughts, the sun of my mental system, without which there was nothing but a dull, aching void, a sort of chaos of rayless gloom. I at last came to love her with the strongest passions of my nature—to look upon her as a being of earthly origin, but of more than mortal mold—a sort of terrestrial divinity, and this, too, while I had friends living, with whom to divide my affections. Judge, then, what must have been my feelings when I came

to know all dead but her! Ah, me! How it pains me to think upon her absence now! Alas! Rose, why did you leave me in the hour of peril?"

"That from the peril she whom you love might save you," answered a sweet, silvery voice in his ear, and at the same moment a soft female hand was laid gently upon his shoulder.

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Albert, in a voice almost stifled with excess of joy. "Rose! Rose! My own dearly-beloved Forest Rose! Do I again really hear thee, feel thee, clasp thee once more?" and in an ecstasy of delight that may be imagined but can never be described, he threw his arms fondly around her slender form, and strained her to his wildly-beating heart in a silent embrace.

For some moments after the meeting of the lovers, not a word was spoken, and then, disengaging his arms, Albert bent down, and imprinted kiss after kiss upon her lips—uttering, at intervals, the wildest exclamations of rapture.

"Tell me," he cried at length, when he had become calm enough to put the question properly. "Tell me, my dear little Forest Rose, where you have been and how you came to absent yourself during such an hour of peril?"

"I will, dear Albert, I will tell you all," replied the other, in a low silvery tone. "But you must first sit down here, and promise to be calm, and address me in a less boisterous tone, for the sharp ears of savages are all around us, and a chance shot, fired in the dark, might effect what all their skill, cunning, and sagacity failed to do in daylight."

"I will do all you require, dearest," answered the

now delighted lover. "But since you speak of a chance shot, let us make our seat between these rocks, where we shall be more safe." Then Albert conducted Rose to a little cavity in the rocks, where he seated her, and himself beside her, and perhaps unconsciously placed an arm around her slender waist."

"But your gallant companion—I must have him by my side, too," said Rose, when Albert signified that all was ready. "To him, generous heart, we owe a lasting debt of gratitude (emphasizing the word in a playful manner, that showed she had overheard his ungenerous comment on the sex feminine generally), and I for one at least, feel that he can never be repaid."

"Don't mention it," answered the old hunter, feeling not a little abashed that his own words should so soon have so palpable a contradiction. "Don't mention it; I've done nothin' for ye but shoot Injins, an' to kill them thar greasy cusses—beg pardon, Miss—comes jest as nateral as it does to draw breath. But as to settin' down, I thank'e all the same, but somebody oughter to stand guard, an' so, while you're telling your story, I'll make myself useful that-a-way, an' I can year ye all the same."

"I have not time now," said Rose, "to enter into particulars concerning my captivity; but at no very distant period, dear Albert, should God permit us both to escape, you shall hear all. Suffice, that I was taken prisoner at the same moment I saw you felled to the earth, by a blow from the breech of a musket. As I saw nothing more of you afterward, I came to the conclusion that you were dead, and this belief was soon to me rendered a certainty by a statement

from the Indians; and, oh! I must leave you to imagine my feelings, for I cannot describe them."

"I can, at least, have an idea of them, from my own," interrupted Albert, "for my captors told me you were dead also. But go on! Go on!"

"I was brought a captive to this place," pursued Rose, "and adopted into the family of an old sachem. It is not my purpose now to relate to you the manner in which I was converted from a white girl into an Indian squaw, but let it suffice; it was hideous enough to me, though I had no choice between it and death, even, or doubtless I should have chosen the latter. With the exception of being a captive among them, I have been treated as well as any; better than most squaws of the tribe, for I have not been required to do much drudgery as generally falls to the lot of the females, and I have been honored with the offer of any warrior among them for a husband, though it is needless to tell you, I have steadily refused to be joined in wedlock to any one of the foes of my race, and the murderers of my friends. The most importunate of all my suitors was one they called Ogwehea."

"I know him," again interrupted Albert, with sudden vehemence. "I know him, the villain! He was the leader of the party that made me prisoner, and he it was that told me you were dead. And so he wished to marry you, eh?" pursued the excited and jealous lover. "Oh, the lying villain! But he shall pay dearly for this!"

"He is already beyond your revenge," rejoined Rose.

"How so?"

"He is dead!"

"Dead! It was but yesterday I saw him taking part in the war-sports on the plain."

"Well, he will never do so more, for I have truly said he is dead. He was shot from a rock in the ravine below here—which rock he ascended to get a chance to pick you off—for he was one of the best marksmen, and accounted one of the bravest warriors among the nation."

"Shot by the unknown marksman, was he! I saw him fall; but since you seem to know so much of his death, pray tell me who is our unknown mysterious friend, who so nobly saved us at the perilous moment? Oh! I feel that I could clasp him in my arms, and call him friend forever, be he red man or white! Tell me, Rose, his name, that I may at least treasure it in my heart, should we never meet."

"He has no name; but she, who fired the rifle, is one that you were led to think had deserted you in the hour of danger, to save her own unworthy life!"

"You, Rose? You?" cried Albert, in a tone of utter astonishment. "Was it indeed you who saved us—who fired the rifle that sent two of our most dangerous foes to eternity?"

"It was I," answered Rose, modestly, leaning her head upon the manly breast of him she loved, and speaking in a low, tremulous tone.

"Eh, Wetzel! what think you now of women?" exclaimed the excited lover. "What think you now of women, my friend?"

"I take it all back," answered the old hunter—"all back, every —— word I've ever said agin the hull race! She's desarvin' o' ye, Master Albert!

She's desarvin' o' ye! God bless her! Rose," he continued, advancing to her side, and speaking in that embarrassed manner which one so uncouth and unfamiliar with the female sex as himself is apt to display: "Rose—Miss Rose—I axes your pardon an' must say I'm powerful sorry fer ever word I've said agin ye. Ye did it han'some, gal, powerful han'some —an' that thar cuss—begs pardon agin—keeled over just as purty as ef he'd bin knocked over by an old Kaintuck rifler. Jest gin my hand a grab, gal—Miss Rose, I mean—jest to let a feller know you don't hold any spite agin him—for it's jest as honest a hand, though I say it myself, as any on the border, an' pulled jest about as many triggers on the infernal red-skins."

Rose seized the proffered hand, and pressing it warmly in both her own, rejoined, with much feeling:

"It needs no apology from one as brave and generous as yourself, Lewis Wetzel, for anything that, in the heat of the moment, and under the peculiar circumstances, you may have uttered in disparagement of one who is indebted to you for her present liberty and comparative happiness. The manner in which I left you, was enough to have thrown doubts of my good faith over the mind of one knowing me far better than yourself. God bless you, gallant hunter! May we all live to recall this day, when the Indian shall be seeking his hunting-grounds in the still more distant far West."

It was impossible to see the features of Wetzel, owing to the darkness, but from this manner of silently squeezing the hand of Rose and turning aside without a remark, it was evident her gentle words

had produced a marked effect upon the mind of the uncouth but intrepid backwoodsman.

"But you have not finished your story," said Albert, anxious for Rose to resume her tale.

"True, I have not; but you have rather spoiled the denouement, by questioning me too closely. However, there is but little to tell to make the whole matter clearly understood. While among the Indians, I managed, even in the first six months of my captivity, to speak their language so as to make myself comprehended on all ordinary topics. By the time I had been with them a year, I could not only understand all that was said to me, but in return could speak quite fluently myself. In becoming master of the language—in appearing to take an unusual interest in their customs and sports—joined to as much seeming contentment as my power for dissembling would permit me to display—in doing all this, I say, I had an object beyond their cunning and sagacity to detect. I believed that if I could ever effect my escape from them, it would not be until I could possess their full and unbounded confidence; and in what way could this be so readily done as by making myself a complete Indian in the shortest space of time possible? It seems almost needless to add that I succeeded in gaining their entire confidence, and was permitted the same freedom as others of my sex.

"It is customary, among the Wyandotts, to let the daughters and wives of distinguished chiefs and warriors take part in the warlike pastimes of the males, and hence a few of the females become nearly as expert with the rifle, the bow, and the tomahawk as their fathers and husbands. With those of my

own sex so distinguished, I was permitted to associate as an equal; and though it may appear strange to you who have ever known me as a timid maiden, to hear it from my lips, yet truth compels me to say that I was not long behind any of them in the mimic games of death. To learn to load and fire the rifle with quickness and precision was my favorite amusement —if indeed amusement it could be called, when I looked upon it only as the means of regaining my liberty. Enough for my present purpose to say, that I became well skilled in its use at last. Then I resolved to escape the first favorable opportunity, and take my favorite weapon along as a protection. Still I believed you were dead; nor did I know to the contrary till I suddenly came upon you at the spring. I knew you, but saw myself unrecognized—yet so overpowered was I with strange emotions, that I could not speak till it was nigh being too late."

"Heaven of mercy," returned Albert, in a tremulous voice. "It makes me shudder to think of it! That I, unwittingly, should be upon the very point of murdering her I loved best on earth! Oh, I can never be too thankful for your escape from such a horrible death!"

"It was indeed horrible," rejoined Rose. "And we may both have cause to thank God for His many mercies to us this day! But to conclude my story. When you had conducted me to the mount here, and put me, as you believed, in a place of safety, I naturally began to look around me to see if there were not some means by which I could aid you in the unequal contest about to be waged. A careful examination of the rocks and your position led me to believe that you would eventually retreat to the very place where

I now find you—where the last stand would be made —and where, if not cut off by an enemy in your rear, you might possibly hold out till night. It then occurred to me that if below, and armed with a rifle, I might be the means of saving you in the last extremity; and no sooner did the thought pass through my mind than I set about carrying out the idea. Along most of the front of the precipice, as you are aware, is a small undergrowth; and crawling along through this, while you were engaged in watching the Indians, I effected my first descent in front, at the very place the first savage had ascended, whom your companion shot down. The Indians saw me, but you did not, owing to my being a little to the left of the avenue in the rocks which you were guarding. I told the savages I had been taken prisoner, but was determined to return to them. They believed my plausible story, and applauded my choice, and I saw at once I had their full confidence. This was what I desired most, as it left me free to act without incurring their suspicion, and, watching my opportunity, when the attention of all was drawn off by one of their fiercest attacks on you—during which I trembled for your safety—I managed to get a rifle and ammunition in my possession and to withdraw without being detected. It seems needless to add more, than that I took up my position near the base of yonder rock, and, aided by an ever-watching Providence did what little lay in my power to prevent the attack upon you from being fatal."

"God bless you, dear Rose! You saved our lives!" was the earnest response of Albert, as he again

strained the fair being beside him to his heart in a fond embrace.

Wetzel now suggested that perhaps it would be best to be devising means of escaping under cover of the darkness. Forthwith a consultation was held, and plans laid accordingly.

Chapter XXII

THE LAST DANGER AND CONCLUSION

The sun had been set something like two hours, and the summit of the Standing Stone was shrouded in a blackness impenetrable by human sight, when three figures moved carefully and stealthily over the rocks, feeling their way at every step, and began their descent to the hill below. Rose was the first to reach the ground, and turning her head upward, she said to the others, in an almost inaudible whisper:

"Be not rash, I beg of you, and forget not my instructions! Follow me at a little distance, and when you hear the signal, drop to the earth, and remain quiet until I return to you. Remember! Remember! Your lives depend on your discretion. God save us all!"

"Amen!" was the whispered response of Albert; and then nothing could be heard but the sighing of the breeze through the forest, and the rustling of the withered leaves.

The moment her companions had gained her side, Rose set forward, and commenced descending the northern slope of the mount noiselessly followed by the others, at the distance of perhaps twenty feet. They had proceeded in this manner scarcely more than a dozen paces, when a low "Hist" from Rose announced danger. Stopping where they were, our scouts sank silently to the earth and listened. The

next moment they heard the voice of Rose addressing another person in the Indian language, who in turn made reply, by which our friends knew that she had already come in contact with one of the sentinels set to guard the mount against their escape.

For some moments the conversation was rather animated, though carried on in a tone too low for Wetzel, who, as before said, understood a smattering of the Huron tongue, to make out anything that was said.

As may readily be imagined, there were strange emotions at work in the breasts of our scouts, each of whom involuntarily tightened the grasp on his rifle. They felt that the peril was great, and they felt it the more keenly, perhaps, that since the last fight, they had counted with so much certainty on escaping a horrible death. It reminded them forcibly that, though comparatively safe, owing to the cover of the darkness, they were far from being free of danger, and that the slightest accident might place them in the hands of the enemy, and all their hopes prove fallacious.

Nor were their feelings in any degree relieved by the suspense which followed; for, after a short conversation, the sound of the speakers' voices grew more and more distant, and at length became wholly inaudible, showing that they were departing together. At last all became still again, and not a sound could be heard giving any indication of what was taking place. Minute followed minute, and still all remained silent, and when a quarter of an hour had rolled away, with no sign of the reappearance of Rose, both Albert and Wetzel experienced an intense anxiety impossible for us to describe. Fancy was busy with

as to be impossible for him to tell. He only knew that he was passing over the prairie, and increasing the distance between himself and the mount. As minute after minute went by, without disturbance, he began to breathe more and more freely. Save a slight pressure of the hand, there was no communication between the lovers, for so intense was the excitement under the peculiar circumstances, that neither ventured to speak even in a whisper. Wetzel, though as much puzzled to tell whither he was going as Albert, did not think proper at the moment to question his fair guide, but, having full confidence in her knowledge and discretion, followed close behind in silence.

At length, greatly to the surprise of our scouts, they beheld several lights sparkling just before them, Rose suddenly came to a halt, uttering the single word, "hist," in a low whisper.

"Stir not—speak not—make no sound whatever. Your lives are hanging on a bare thread, as it were," she said, and then silently glided away from them.

She had scarcely gone a dozen steps, when a dog ran toward her and uttered a fierce bark. At the same time she heard the click of the rifles of her friends behind her as they cocked them, ready for an onset. Addressing a few words in the Indian tongue to the dog in a low tone, the animal walked away, apparently satisfied that he had caused a false alarm; and then hastily rejoining her friends, she said in a whisper, almost angrily:

"Uncock your rifles! Why are you so imprudent, when I have warned you that the least sound unusual will prove fatal to all? You are now on the very bord-

ers of the Indian village, and a hundred ears are open to detect the slightest evidence of your presence!"

"Good heavens!" returned Albert, "I knew not that. Why have you led us here, dearest?"

"As the only way by which you can escape. The whole plain is guarded in every direction but this, and I deemed it less hazardous to attempt a passage through the village, than through the lines of sentinels posted along other outlets from the mount. But hush! Down to the earth again!"

This last injunction was caused by hearing the tread of a moccasined foot near where the party stood, apparently approaching them. As the hunters obeyed the order of Rose, and silently placed themselves flat upon the earth, the latter glided forward, and the next moment was addressed by the unwelcome comer, whose voice betrayed him to be a warrior. Rose made some reply, uttered a light laugh, and the other departed apparently satisfied. Although this interruption lasted but a moment, yet it had a powerful effect upon the scouts, and caused them a thrill of fear unlike anything they had experienced through all the terrible trials of that eventful day. The difference was this: Life was not really worth any more to them now than then; but now they were looking upon escape as certain, and, in the sudden danger occurring, felt a terrible, heart-sickening reaction.

As soon as the warrior had passed on, they silently rose to their feet, and were again immediately rejoined by their fair guide, who in a whisper bade them follow her steps. She now led them right among the clustering lodges. As they stealthily moved along,

they could occasionally perceive a dark figure stalking about between them and some of the many smouldering fires, and others squatted down smoking lazily, and others more lazily still stretched out at full length upon the earth. Several times they passed warriors singly and in groups, so near that Rose, who understood their lingo, could distinctly hear the latter discussing the events of the day, wondering by what magic our gallant scouts had been enabled to hold out against an enemy so numerous, powerful, and well skilled in all the many stratagems of border warfare.

At last, just as they were leaving the village—and when the many huts had become more scattered, and confidence in themselves restored in like proportion —a squaw suddenly issued from a wigwam directly in their path. Before the least precautions could be taken, the squaw brushed against Rose, uttering an exclamation of surprise. Our scouts were only a step behind, and for a moment believed that all was lost; but exercising their usual presence of mind, they again dropped silently to the earth, and awaited the result with feelings better imagined than described.

Nor did the interview seem likely to terminate as favorably as those which had previously occurred between Rose and the warriors she had met, for by her manner of speaking, as well as now and then a word she utttered which Wetzel could understand, it was evident the old squaw was suspicious that all was not as it should be. Her voice was loud and imperious, as she put question after question to the trembling Rose, moving about the while, till at last she actually came so near to Albert, that he was afraid to stir a single limb, lest he should touch her and

expose his presence. To the mild but slightly tremulous answers of Rose, she responded in a haughty, angry tone, that showed she put little faith in what the poor girl said. As if to make matters still worse, some of the many warriors loitering about the village, attracted by the loud conversation, began to approach; and Albert, looking upon discovery as certain to follow, was already on the point of springing to his feet and attempting a silent death upon the old hag—by stabbing, strangulation, or both together—when, uttering an angry exclamation, she suddenly bounded away in the direction of a smoldering fire in front of a lodge, not more than thirty or forty paces distant.

"Oh, God! We are lost!" cried Rose, in a fearful whisper, the moment she was gone. "We are lost, dear Albert, unless you can effect your escape while she is absent. It is the mother of Ogwehea, and enraged for the loss of her son, she either believes or pretends to believe, that I have had something to do with the affair, and that I am even now assisting you to escape. She has gone for a torch to make a search for you—she strongly contends that you, hidden by the darkness are within hearing distance of her voice. See! see! she has reached the embers, and I hear others approaching. Oh, fly! Fly! And escape, if such a thing be possible!"

While Rose was speaking, Albert and Wetzel had sprung to their feet, and now stood close beside the frightened and trembling maiden.

"But you—you, my own dear Forest Rose—you must go with us! I cannot part from you again."

"No, no—leave me, leave me! Fly, fly! Fear not for me. If you are absent and she finds you not, I

shall be safe from harm — otherwise we shall all perish together. There, see! She has gathered a brand, and is now returning. And look! Others are joining her! Oh, for God's sake! If you love me, fly! Fly at once—fast and far, but silently, and I will soon join you."

The emergency was too great to admit of longer delay, and pressing the hand of Rose in silence, and even venturing to imprint a kiss upon her trembling lips, Albert turned, and touching Wetzel on the shoulder, glided away like a specter, followed as noiselessly by the old hunter.

Both soon had reason to congratulate themselves on their timely escape, for immediately after, the brand which the old squaw had seized, burst into flame, and shone directly on the spot our scouts had vacated, revealing only the solitary figure of little Forest Rose, standing firmly erect, with her arms folded on her bosom, awaiting the coming of the suspicious mother and the half a dozen warriors that had joined her.

Although our scouts continued on the retreat, fearing to halt in such a dangerous vicinity, they, by looking behind them occasionally, could note the progress of events with considerable accuracy. On coming up to Rose, the old woman appeared to engage the girl in conversation, while the warriors separated, and darting off in various directions, soon formed a large circle, and began carefully to examine the ground and approach the light in the center. Some ten minutes were thus occupied in the search, when the last one came in, and all were apparently satisfied that the suspicions of the old woman were unfounded. A short consultation was then held, when the whole

party broke up, and Rose was allowed to depart in peace.

Fearful her steps might be watched, should she venture toward her friends, she carelessly sauntered off in an opposite direction. The moment she found herself entirely alone, and concealed by darkness, she turned about, and noiselessly glided on after them.

But if the night proved a safeguard against the detection of the hunters, it was now as likely to prove fatal to their hopes, by keeping asunder those who had become separated. How were Rose and her friends to meet, since neither could see a hand before them and dared not speak above a whisper for fear of exposing themselves to a dangerous enemy?

This was truly a perplexing, if not fearful predicament. Alarmed at the thought and not knowing what to do, Albert asked advice of his companion. The other studied a few moments, and then replied still in a whisper:

"I hev it; I hev it! Jest as easy as shootin'. D'ye remember the whip-poor-will, lad? D'ye remember the bird? Jest let her sing again—but not too loud, mind!"

"A happy thought," returned Albert, squeezing the old hunter's hand in an ecstasy of delight at the suggestion, and he forthwith proceeded to put it into practice.

But for a long time it seemed to be without success, and Albert was about to abandon his imitation in despair, when a light quick step, and a low "hist" announced the only being he loved on earth, the beautiful Forest Rose.

The next moment the lovers were clasped in each

other's embrace, and the earnest words, "God bless you!" "God be praised!" escaped each other's lips in whispers that scarcely rose above the gentlest sighing of the breeze.

The danger was now nearly past, but still great caution was requisite to avoid exposure—and swiftly, stealthily, noiselessly, the whole party glided away. Crossing the Hock-hocking, they kept along its western bank for something like an hour, when the silvery voice of Rose broke the silence with the heart cheering words:

"Thank God, we are saved!" and dropping upon her knees, with her lover beside her, both poured out their souls in a prayer of thanksgiving to Him who had preserved them unharmed through their many trials and perils, and brought them so mysteriously together again, to the enjoyment of a happiness rendered tenfold more delightful for the painful adversity each had experienced.

And here, kind reader, we must bring our story to a close. True, our lovers still had a long journey to perform before they could find themselves in a place of absolute safety from the Indians, but, as no incidents worthy of record occurred on that journey, we shall not weary you with further details but pass it over by saying that, following the Hock-hocking river, they in safety reached the station just above its junction with the Ohio, after a fatiguing march of three days from quitting Standing Stone, and the village of the Hurons.

It seems almost needless to add that all were received with the most heartfelt welcome by the inmates of the station. After remaining two or three days

to recruit from the fatigues of the journey, during which little Forest Rose, an object alike of love and curiosity, was rechristened, if we may so term it, and robed in garments becoming her sex and station, the whole party set out for Campus Martius. This was a military station on the banks of the Muskingum, near or on the present site of Marietta, and then occupied by a large military corps, and as the headquarters of Governor St. Clair. Out of respect to our gallant scouts and to insure them from further dangers of the wilderness, Colonel Martin with a portion of his garrison accompanied them as an escort. On their arrival at Campus Martius, the Colonel introduced them to the Governor, who, on learning the valuable service they had rendered to the country, received them warmly and kindly, and besides introducing them to his family, frankly tendered both Lewis Wetzel and Albert Maywood a commission in the territorial militia. The former refused, but the latter accepted the offer; and to the day of his death, our hero bore the same rank as his gallant but unfortunate father.

A day or two after the arrival of our friends at Campus Martius, Albert and Rose were united in the holy bonds of matrimony, the Governor himself officiating as magistrate, in the presence of the whole garrison, who fired a military salute in honor of the occasion.

Having seen his friend united to the being of his choice, and both rendered happy, Wetzel, against all persuasion, took leave of each, and again returned to the forest, with the scalps collected on their recent expedition dangling from his girdle. Albert suspected

that his first care would be to place these trophies upon the lonely grave in the distant cave, but refrained from any reference to the promise to conduct him thither upon their safe return, thinking that he preferred this time to visit it alone and would at some future time return and conduct him to the spot. In this expectation, however, Albert was doomed to sad disappointment, for his eyes never again beheld the uncouth form of the faithful friend to whom he and his beloved Forest Rose owed all the happiness of their subsequent days. He did hear reports at intervals regarding the exploits of the intrepid Indian hunter, scalper, and spy in the far Northwest, and ten years later that he, with his old friend Simon Kenton, had joined the expedition of Lewis and Clark for the exploration of the newly-acquired territory of the United States stretching away to Oregon on the border of the boundless Pacific. Historians of that expedition say, however, that Wetzel turned back from the headwaters of the Missouri, preferring the life of a lone scout in the forest, and he died at Natchez, Mississippi, in the year 1808.

The brilliant victory of General Wayne, in the year 1794, over the combined forces of the different Indian tribes, so disheartened the latter, that they were fain to bury the hatchet; and in 1795 a treaty was concluded at Greenville, by which most of their hunting grounds were ceded to the United States. Among the rest was Tarhetown, and the possessions of the Wyandotts, embracing the scene where a large portion of the present story is located—Tarhe himself being present, and signing away his beautiful home with his own hands.

Albert and his lovely wife remained at Campus Martius till after the peace of Greenville, when he removed to the lands occupied by his father at the time of his death, where he built a very comfortable residence, lived to the age of sixty, and at last went down to his grave, beloved, lamented, and full of honors—having twice been elected a member of the State Legislature, also High Sheriff of the county for several years, besides having filled various other offices of trust in the gift of the people.

From the time of Albert's celebrated escape from the Indians, and the recovery of her so dear to him, his life was a scene of unalloyed happiness, till grim Death snatched from him the fair partner of his bosom, which occurred about three years previous to his own demise. A private cemetery was made on the little knoll—the scene of the painful tragedy recorded in the former portion of this humble narrative—and here the remains of an earthly angel were deposited, with a white slab of marble to mark the resting place, on the head of which was engraved this curious epitaph:

THE LAST HOME OF FOREST ROSE—ONCE AN ANGEL HERE—NOW AN ANGEL IN HEAVEN.

Beside the remains of his wife, were subsequently deposited those of Captain Albert Maywood—together with those of his father, mother, brother, and sister—and a large monument, since erected, briefly tells the eventful story of their horrible butchery.

Albert and Rose left behind them two children—a son and a daughter—each bearing an appellation of

their respected parents—and both, so far as we have been able to learn, inheriting their many noble virtues. The knoll has remained the cemetery of the family, and the descendants of the Maywoods are still in the possession of the lands of their ancestors.

THE END

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